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The Speech Theory of James Abercrombie, 1758-1841.

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THE SPEECH THEORY OF JAMES ABERCROMBIE, 1758-1841

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
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in

The Department of Speech

by

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ABSTRACT

James Abercrombie (1758-1841) contributed two early publications to the development of speech education in the United States: his Compend of Elocution, a textbook intended for students in secondary school which appeared in 1803, and "Lectures on the Arts of Reading and Public Speaking," which he published serially in a literary journal, the Port Folio, beginning in 1809. He based these works and his theory of speech education upon the writings of English rhetoricians, grammarians, orthoepists, and essayists. Since he founded and taught within a system of English education in the Philadelphia Academy, an added dimension, the educational context for his presentation of speech theory, could be studied. In his writings Abercrombie avoided a restatement of classical doctrine characteristic of some of his contemporaries, and as a result he reflected the significant influence of British rhetorical thought upon the developing American discipline.

The method employed in the reconstruction of Abercrombie's speech theory involved determining the definition and limitation of his subject, the divisions of his theory, the sources he employed, and the specific original contribution, if any, which could be attributed to Abercrombie.

In his publications Abercrombie focused upon delivery of written sentiment. However, a more broadly conceived understanding of rhetoric pervaded his educational system in the Philadelphia Academy. In its curriculum students were taught to structure thought and to present it orally. Their studies included logic, composition, style, and delivery.

James Abercrombie derived his basic orientation from the writings of Hugh Blair, James Beattie, and William Barron, who reflected the belles lettres understanding of language as a response to man's communicative urge and natural expressiveness. Considering structured thought as intentionally representative of logical and emotional meaning, he based his analysis of delivery upon an intrinsic examination of language and form. Through an analysis of structure and a thorough apprehension of intended meaning, then, the spontaneous recreation of content--the reader or speaker's goal--could be accomplished.

Abercrombie presented his subject in two divisions--the voice and bodily action, that which the listener hears and sees. Judged by the space assigned, the major emphasis in Abercrombie's theory is upon the voice. He considered principles of articulation, accent, emphasis, quantity, pauses, and tones. An interest in language led him to the grammatical writings of Robert Nares, Samuel Johnson, and Lindley

Murray. For his specific comments upon vocal delivery, he relied chiefly upon writers of the elocution movement, James Burgh, John Walker, and Thomas Sheridan. Abercrombie considered facial expression and gesture as divisions of action. Relating the processes of delivery, his presentation continued an examination of "tones (vocal delivery), looks and gesture." He presented James Beattie's division of action into natural and artificial signs, James Burgh's discussion of the passions, and John Ward and Gilbert Austin's descriptions of conventional gesture.

Abercrombie's interest in form pervaded his application of the principles of delivery to reading and public speaking. He analyzed prose, poetry, and figurative language, and suggested delivery appropriate to each. In his discussion of public speaking, he treated the parts of a discourse and the manner of their expression. He included examples of the literary and speech forms which he discussed. William Barron and Hugh Blair were his major sources for this presentation.

The chief significance of Abercrombie's work lies in his understanding of the oral nature of language, the relationship between form and meaning, the importance of the author's intent, and the theory of expression which related the literary process to effective oral presentation. His sources suggest the influence of British writers upon the development of speech education in America.

INTRODUCTION

Studies of the development of rhetorical theory in the United States have been principally of two kinds: first, those which have examined speech education in its institutional expressions,¹ and second, those which have given attention to personalities of the

¹Among studies of this type are, the following:

Ota Thomas, "The Theory and Practice of Disputation at Yale, Harvard, and Dartmouth, from 1759-1800" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, State University of Iowa, 1941).

Elaine Pagel Paden, "The Theory and Practice of Disputation at Princeton, Columbia, and the University of Pennsylvania from 1750-1800" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, State University of Iowa, 1943).

David Potter, Debating in the Colonial Chartered Colleges ("Contributions to Education," No. 899; New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1944).

various movements.² Both approaches to the study of academic traditions and practices have contributed to our understanding of the development of the discipline which has come to be called speech education. However, no one can lay claim to a complete presentation of the multi-faceted growth of this academic area. For this reason yet another study directed toward increasing our understanding of the history of speech education was begun. This study of James Abercrombie and his writings on the arts of reading and public speaking has both scholarly precedent and historical interest within the larger pattern of the development of rhetorical theory in the United States.

Four divisions of influence upon rhetorical theory in colonial America have found general acceptance among historians interested

²Studies of this kind include, the following:

Wilson B. Paul, "John Witherspoon's Theory and Practice of Public Speaking" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, State University of Iowa, 1940).

R. Clyde Yarbrough, "Homiletical Theory and Practice of Ebenezer Porter" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, State University of Iowa, 1942).

Lester Hale, "A Re-evaluation of the Vocal Philosophy of James Rush as Based on a Study of His Sources" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Louisiana State University, 1942).

John P. Hoshor, "The Rhetorical Theory of Chauncey Allen Goodrich" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, State University of Iowa, 1947).

in the development of speech education in the United States. The foundation upon which American theory was established derived from these general areas of influence: first, the rhetoric of style; second, the classical tradition; third, rhetoric and belles lettres; and fourth, the elocution movement.³ The acceptance of these divisions, however, implies neither categoricalness nor chronological sequence. The rhetoric of style was related to that of belles lettres, which in turn anticipated in many particulars the elocution movement. Depending upon one's predispositions, the classical tradition may be viewed as separate and unrelated to the less Aristotelian, but in reality Quintilian and Cicero were known as well to other traditions forming a body of learning designed to promote fine speaking and writing. Any seeming segregation resulted from a failure of rhetoricians following the classical concepts to relate their restatements to the studies of their contemporaries.

Assigning probable significance to writings or movements is at best difficult. That measure of influence in colonial America claimed, perhaps though idealism, for the classical tradition is

³Warren Guthrie, "Rhetorical Theory in Colonial America," The History of Speech Education in America, ed. Karl Wallace (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1954), pp. 48-59.

exaggerated. The studies of the rhetorical theory of John Quincy Adams and John Witherspoon and those of the rhetorical practices in colonial colleges and universities must be re-examined in relation to other writers and institutional expressions contemporary in influence and activity, yet largely unacknowledged.

In the writings of James Abercrombie a philosophy of education and two streams of rhetorical thought merged into a body of theory predicated upon the study of the English language and directed toward animated and vigorous expression through writing and speaking. Abercrombie implemented his educational philosophy in a school, the Philadelphia Academy. From his study of the theories of language origin, structure, style, and delivery he derived an approach to the teaching of oral communication which he expressed in a secondary school textbook and a series of lectures on the arts of reading and public speaking.

The purpose of this present study, then, is the reconstruction of the rhetorical theory of James Abercrombie as it derived from the writings of his contemporaries, from the educational system of colonial Philadelphia and of Abercrombie's academy, and from the general cultural environment of the period in which thoughtful men esteemed both oral and written expression in the English language. This study cannot tell the complete story, but it can broaden our understanding of the development of rhetorical theory in the United States.

CHAPTER I

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF JAMES ABERCROMBIE

James Abercrombie was born in Philadelphia on January 26, 1758, to James and Margaret Bennett Abercrombie. His father, a native of Dundee, Scotland, was an officer in the British navy and for a time served with the East India trade. In 1753 he came to America and made his home in Philadelphia. He continued in his profession as a seaman until his death in a shipwreck in the German Ocean in 1760.¹ His son, then two years old, was left in the care of his mother, a "devotedly pious as well as highly intelligent woman,"² who supervised Abercrombie's primary education.

¹Horace W. Smith, Life and Correspondence of the Rev. William Smith (Philadelphia: Ferguson Brothers and Company, 1880), I, 563.

²William B. Sprague, Annals of the American Pulpit (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1859), V, 392.

Prior to his entrance to the College of Philadelphia in 1773,³ he spent two or three years in a preparatory English academy which was headed by a Dr. Gardiner.⁴ He graduated in June 1776, with the following: John Leeds Bosman, John Clopton, William Cocke, Jacob Hall, Thomas Duncan Smith, William Thomas, and Ralph Wiltshire. Horace W. Smith, whose biography of his father, the Reverend William Smith, contains many interesting references to the careers of other Philadelphians, describes Abercrombie as being the graduate who ". . . became best known in Philadelphia."⁵ His classmates were also to become distinguished. Bosman attained some literary prominence and, with Abercrombie, was a contributor to the Port Folio; Clopton became a greatly admired patriot in the Revolutionary War, and later a Virginia statesman; Cocke became a United States Senator from Tennessee; and Smith, a respected Philadelphia physician.⁶

In 1779 Abercrombie received the Master of Arts degree from

³Persifor Frazer (ed.), University of Pennsylvania Biographical Catalogue of the Matriculates of the College, 1749-1893 (Philadelphia: Anvil Printing Company, 1894), p. 19.

⁴Sprague, loc. cit.

⁵Smith, loc. cit.

⁶Frazer, loc. cit.

the college. Smith quotes the minutes of the trustees as follows:

At a meeting of the 28th of June, 1779, 'The Provost represented,' say the minutes, 'that the following Gentlemen who have been educated in this Seminary and took their Bachelor of Arts degree with great approbation, had applied in due time and manner to be admitted to the degree of Master of Arts, for which they are of standing and qualified according to the rules of the Institution, viz.: . . . James Abercrombie. . . .' The names of these gentlemen were accordingly ordered to be inserted in the mandate for admission to the degree aforesaid.⁷

After his graduation with the Bachelor of Arts degree in 1776, Abercrombie studied theology with the Reverend William White, Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania. He was forced to discontinue his studies in 1778 because of "diseased eye-lids." After a lengthy period of painful treatment,⁸

⁷Smith, op. cit., II, 18.

⁸Sprague, op. cit. The account of Abercrombie's illness is presented in Sprague's biographical sketch as follows: "He had for some years been affected with a disease of the eye-lids; and, as surgical aid was deemed necessary, Dr. Bond, himself an eminent surgeon, recommended that he should make a voyage to England, in order to avail himself of the highest surgical skill; but, the Executive Council refused to allow him to embark; and, as the British army shortly after took possession of Philadelphia, Dr. Grant, the Surgeon General, undertook the cure by lunar caustic, to be applied for five hours. Dr. G., dining that day with the Commander in Chief General Howe, forgot his appointment, and suffered the caustic to remain several hours too long; and when it came to be removed, the eye was swollen and black; and apparently in a hopeless state. The forgetful doctor, however, still promised a cure; but, as the British army suddenly evacuated the city, he had no further opportunity of making proof of his skill, and the patient fell back into the hands of Dr. Bond, who succeeded, contrary to all expectation, in effecting a complete restoration of his sight."

Abercrombie decided in 1780 to abandon his theological studies altogether and to become a merchant.⁹

In June 1783 Abercrombie became a partner of an intimate friend and an active and experienced businessman, John Miller, Jr.¹⁰ For ten years he continued in business. In 1792 he was elected a member of the Common Council of the city of Philadelphia. In 1793 he solicited an appointment to the office of Treasurer of the Mint. Although he was described as ". . .having the most respectable patronage, . . .General Washington, in consequence of a resolution which he had formed not to appoint two persons from the same state, as officers in any one department, felt obliged to deny the application."¹¹ He then took an office in the Bank of the United States, but he was so completely disgruntled with the position that he resigned it, ". . .after the labour of a single day."

During these years, Abercrombie seemed never to lose his desire to enter the ministry. Consequently in 1793 after encouragement from the Reverend Dr. White and other clergymen he resumed his theological studies, and was ordained as Deacon in St. Peter's

⁹Smith, op. cit., I, 563.

¹⁰Sprague, op. cit., V, 393.

¹¹Ibid.

Church on December 29, 1793.¹² He became one of the assistant ministers in the United Churches of Christ and St. Peter's on June 9, 1794.¹³ Smith explained that the clergymen who served with the bishop in the united churches were popularly called assistant ministers, but they held the charter title of minister because Bishop White, as head of the corporation, was designated rector.¹⁴ On December 28, 1794, he received priest's orders and ministered both in the city and in nearby parishes until his retirement.

In 1796 Abercrombie was elected to membership in the American Philosophical Society,¹⁵ and in October 1804 he received the honorary degree Doctor of Divinity from the College of New Jersey.¹⁶ The Port Folio describes Dr. Abercrombie's wide interests during this period as follows:

¹²Joseph Dennis, "Sketch of the Life of the Reverend James Abercrombie, D. D.," The Port Folio, IV (1810), 394.

¹³Benjamin Dorr, A Historical Account of Christ Church, Philadelphia, from Its Foundation, A.D. 1695, to A.D. 1841; and of St. Peter's and St. James's until the Separation of the Churches (New York: Swords, Stanford, and Co., Philadelphia: R.S.H. George, 1841), p. 218.

¹⁴Smith, op. cit., I, 563.

¹⁵Sprague, loc. cit.

¹⁶Dennie, Port Folio, IV, (1810), 395.

Dr. Abercrombie has not confined himself to the performance of his pastoral and parochial duties; but, stimulated by a laudable desire to extend his usefulness, and by a love of literature, (and induced possibly by the inadequacy of a slender salary to meet the exigences of a numerous family), he has engaged in the instruction of youth; an employment honourable in itself, and not altogether uncongenial to the clerical character, although, perhaps to a mind less indefatigable than Dr. A.'s, too laborious to be superadded to its high and responsible duties.¹⁷

Abercrombie founded the Philadelphia Academy in 1800. As the institution in which he put his educational theories into practice, it figured prominently in the reconstruction and evaluation of his contributions. The period, then, from 1800 through 1817, while Abercrombie served as headmaster of the academy, was the period of his literary and educational prominence in Philadelphia.

After his resignation from the academy, Abercrombie devoted his full attention to his pastoral duties. In 1832 he resigned from Christ Church, and confined his activities to St. Peter's where he continued to serve less than a year.¹⁸ The minutes of the vestry gave this account of his resignation:

1832: November 7. The Rev. Dr. Abercrombie tenders his resignation as assistant minister of Christ Church, which is accepted. He had held

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Dorr, op. cit., p. 246.

that office for more than thirty-eight years; having been elected to it in June 1794. The vestry voted to the Rev. Dr. Abercrombie, on his resigning his charge, an annuity of six hundred dollars for life; and St. Peter's did the same.¹⁹

Sprague reports, "He continued to reside in Philadelphia, enjoying the society, and ministering to the gratification of a large circle of friends, during the residue of his life."²⁰ Abercrombie died on June 6, 1841.²¹

His contemporaries considered Abercrombie an eloquent speaker and an effective reader. Bishop W. H. DeLancey, the successor of Abercrombie at St. Peter's said that he was ". . . long admired for his unrivalled excellence as a reader of our admirable liturgy, for his ability as a writer, and his eloquence as a preacher, and. . . in his long continued, active and steady discharge of ministerial duty, an unbroken attachment to the cause of Christ and of his church."²²

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Sprague, Annals of the American Pulpit, V, 393.

²¹"The Rev. Dr. Abercrombie," The Banner of the Cross, III (1841), 222-223.

²²William H. DeLancey, The Pastor's Obligations to His Flock, a Sermon, Preached in St. Peter's Church, Philadelphia, June 23, 1833 (Philadelphia: Jesper Harding, 1833), p. 34.

The Reverend Henry M. Mason, rector of St. Peter's Parish, Talbot County, Maryland, writes as follows:

He had remarkable powers of eloquence, especially if the term be considered as applicable to the desk in distinction from the pulpit; for though his sermons sometimes produced a great effect upon his hearers, his manner of reading the service was not only impressive, but well nigh irresistible.²³

Mason describes Abercrombie's eloquence by noting, "The late Dr. Gardiner of Boston once. . .observed, 'There is no composition in the English language so difficult to read as our liturgy--there are only two men in America who can read it properly, and one is Abercrombie of Philadelphia. ' " A Mr. Cook, whom Mason describes as "a celebrated American actor," is reported to have said to Abercrombie, "I come to St. Peter's to benefit by your emphasis and intonation."²⁴

David Paul Brown writes appreciatively of Dr. Abercrombie's learning, and states that the precision and beauty of his elocution were unsurpassed. But, he continues, ". . .it might reasonably be questioned whether a gentleman, whatever might be his talents or attainments, could devote so large a part of his life to academic pursuits, without forming some habits adverse to the most persuasive

²³Sprague, loc. cit.

²⁴Ibid.

and effective ministration of the Gospel."²⁵

Bishop DeLancey mentions his interest in oratory. "He was peculiarly susceptible to the influence of oratory in the pulpit. . . . Conspicuous himself as a reader and preacher, he had studied the subject with care and interest, understood and taught its principles, and had subdued his own adverse voice to an extent which gave him command of its expressive powers in an eminent degree."²⁶

His activities while headmaster of the Philadelphia Academy won for Abercrombie recognition and praise from his contemporaries. Aside from his long pastoral affiliation with the united churches, these two decades seem his most influential. An examination of Abercrombie's published works also supported this conclusion. His publications include the following:

Sermons

A Sermon preached in Christ Church and St. Peter's, Philadelphia: On Wednesday, May 29, 1798. Being the Day Appointed by the President as a Day of Fasting, Humiliation, and Prayers, throughout the United States of North America.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 399. Brown described his voice in the following manner: "His voice was inclined to be harsh, but his delivery was dignified and agreeable."

A Sermon occasioned by the death of Major General Alexander Hamilton, who was killed by Aaron Burr, Esq., Vice President of the United States, in a duel, July 11, 1804. Preached in Christ Church and St. Peter's, Philadelphia, on Sunday, July 22d, 1804.

A Sermon on the Liturgy of the Protestant Episcopal Church, Preached before the Convention held in Christ Church, Philadelphia, June 15, 1808.

Two Sermons: the First Preached on Thursday, July 30; the Second, Preached on Thursday, August 20, 1813. Being the Days of Fasting, Humiliation, and Prayer, Appointed by Public Authority.

A Funeral Sermon on the Importance and Improvement of Time Preached in St. Peter's Church, Philadelphia, November 13, 1814.

A Sermon on Enoch's Walking with God, 1835.

A Sermon occasioned by the Death of the Right Reverend William White, D. D., Preached at St. James's Church on July 24, 1836.

Extract from a Sermon on the Death of the Reverend John Andrews, D. D., Preached in St. James's and St. Peter's Churches, April 3rd, 1813, the Sunday after his Decease.

Other Works

The Service and an Appropriate Prayer at the Opening of the African Church of St. Thomas, 1794.

The Catechism of the Protestant Episcopal Church, with an Appendix, occasional prayers, etc., 1798.

Two Compends: I. of Elocution, II. of Natural History, 1803.

Lectures on the Catechism, on Confirmation, and the Liturgy of the Protestant Episcopal Church, with an Address to Parents, Sponsors, and Guardians, 1807.

An improved edition of Murray's Abridged Grammar, with notes, 1807; second edition, 1808.

An improved edition of Murray's Large Grammar, with notes, 1808.

Documents relating to the Marriage of William Penn, Esq., 1809.

"A Course of Lectures on Reading and Public Speaking," 1809.

Lectures on the Catechism and on Confirmation, 1811.

Lectures on the Liturgy, 1811.

Prospectus of Samuel Johnson's Works, 1811.

The Mourner Comforted, 1812.²⁷

At the close of each year Abercrombie delivered "A Charge to the Graduates of the Philadelphia Academy." These occasional addresses presented a summary of the studies conducted in the academy and an exhortation to continued accomplishments in professional or academic careers. These were published annually from 1804 through 1811 in the Port Folio. With the Reverend C. H. Wharton, Abercrombie published the Quarterly Theological Magazine, first in Burlington, New Jersey in 1813, and then in Philadelphia for its second and final volume in 1814.²⁸ About

²⁷ Lists of Abercrombie's published works were found in Sprague and in the Port Folio. These were supplemented by references included in the Library of Congress Catalogue and in American Bibliography.

²⁸ Quarterly Theological Magazine, I (1813) and II (1814).

1833, Abercrombie collected his publications beginning with the Fast Sermon of 1798 and had printed for them a title and a table of contents, listing sixteen items. Later he added four other items, ending chronologically with his Sermon of 1835.²⁹ This volume, entitled Sermons, Lectures, & Charges, was variously cited among Abercrombie's published works.³⁰

The rise of Abercrombie in literary and academic circles was almost coincident with the arrival on the Philadelphia scene of the Port Folio and its distinguished editor, Joseph Dennie (1768-1812). In The Literary History of Philadelphia, E. P. Oberholtzer describes the Port Folio, as follows:

The Port Folio was published in one form or another from 1801 until 1827; therefore for more than a quarter of a century it enhanced in a material way the public love and respect in America for poetry, the essay, satire, criticism, and the literary fine arts. No magazine in the country exerted a more beneficent influence in that direction.³¹

²⁹Letter from Clifford K. Shipton, Director, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts, February 15, 1961.

³⁰The Church Historical Society, Austin, Texas, has both the early collection and the later one. Examination of the two verified the writer's supposition and Mr. Shipton's explanation of the nature and contents of the volumes.

³¹Ellis Paxton Oberholtzer, The Literary History of Philadelphia (Philadelphia: George W. Jacobs and Company, 1906), p. 168.

Through the publication of the Port Folio, Dennie became a leader among a circle of literary figures which included the members of the Tuesday Club, an informal literary society, and the contributors to the Port Folio. Among these there were, in addition to Abercrombie, such men of letters as Richard Rush, the lawyer, son of Dr. Benjamin Rush; Judge Joseph Hopkinson, Horace Binney, and William Meredith, all of the Philadelphia bar; Robert Walsh, the author and editor; Charles Brockden Brown, the novelist; and John Blair Linn, the poet; Nicholas Biddle and Charles Jared Ingersoll, lawyer and author.³² Another frequent contributor of poetry to the Port Folio was John Quincy Adams.³³

Abercrombie's association with Dennie, the publication of his articles in the Port Folio, and his prominence in the cultural life of Philadelphia suggest the probability of his affiliation with this intellectual coterie. Dennie came to Philadelphia in 1799, and wrote to his friend and business associate, Roger Vose, early in 1800, "In my new life all is strange and new. At leisure hours I mingle with society and see it in other forms than those to which I have been accustomed. I dine and sup almost daily with a crowd of strangers, but my intimates are select and few. I go to church and converse in

³²Ibid., p. 176.

³³R. C. Randall, "Authors of the Port Folio Revealed by the Hall Files," American Literature, II (1940), 379-416.

the evening parties of Parson Abercrombie, but Presbyterian conventricles, True Americans, true Indians, and swindling pedlers, I shun."³⁴ In May, 1800, he wrote to his parents, as follows: "One of my frequent associates is Parson Abercrombie, the Rector of St. Peter's Church, a Scholar, a Gentleman and Christian."³⁵ John Davis, an English traveller who passed through Philadelphia in June or July 1801, said of Dennie's associates: "In Philadelphia I found . . . Mr. Dennie who presented me to Mr. Wilkins, and Mr. Wilkins to the Rev. J. Abercrombie. . . ." Davis described Dennie and his associates as "a constellation of American genius."³⁶

Dennie found occasion from time to time to apprise his readers of Abercrombie's activities and accomplishments. In the second issue of the Port Folio,³⁷ published January 10, 1801, he included two letters from James Boswell to Abercrombie which acknowledged material sent to Boswell and included in the third edition of his

³⁴Laura Green Pedder, The Letters of Joseph Dennie 1768-1812, University of Maine Studies, 2nd Series (Orono, Maine: University Press, 1936), p. 179.

³⁵Ibid., p. 185.

³⁶Harold Milton Ellis, Joseph Dennie and His Circle, University of Texas Studies in English, No. 3 (Austin: University Press, 1915), p. 153.

³⁷Port Folio, I (1801), 10-11.

celebrated Life of Samuel Johnson.³⁸

The disturbing practice which journalists of this period followed-- that of designating authorship of articles by initials, as "A.", or by Latin pseudonyms, as "Sciblerius,"--makes their identification exceedingly difficult. Many articles which dealt with matters related to education, speaking or reading were signed "A.". One article which appeared in the Port Folio,³⁹ and was so designated, "A Description of the Yellow Springs," was included by Abercrombie in the collection of his published works. While one may conjecture that Abercrombie's contributions to the Port Folio may exceed those directly acknowledged, the inclusion of many articles, letters, sermons, charges and the lectures on rhetoric which may be readily identified as his sufficiently demonstrate Abercrombie's importance among the contributors to the Port Folio.

³⁸In the third edition of James Boswell's Life of Johnson (1799), the author acknowledged Abercrombie's contributions which reached Boswell while the second edition of the work was being printed. Boswell noted, "While a former edition of my work was passing through the press, I was unexpectedly favoured with a packet from Philadelphia, from Mr. James Abercrombie, a gentleman of that country, who is pleased to honour me with very high praise of my Life of Dr. Johnson. To have the fame of my illustrious friend, and his faithful biographer, echoed from the New World is extremely flattering; and my grateful acknowledgements shall be wafted across the Atlantic." James Boswell, Life of Johnson, ed. Augustine Birrell (Westminster: Archibald Constable and Co., Ltd., 1904) III, 62-63.

³⁹Port Folio, IV (1810), 44-47.

In introducing Abercrombie's articles, Dennie frequently comments upon the qualities of his friend, praising him as "an able and accomplished Preceptor,"⁴⁰ a "learned friend,"⁴¹ an orator and "eloquent panegyrist,"⁴² and "a very polite and correct scholar."⁴³ Dennie found praiseworthy the balance which Abercrombie achieved among his varied interests--"his honourable exertions in the cause of literature and religion."⁴⁴ The many articles published in the Port Folio and the warmth with which these were introduced by the editor, indicate the appreciation and genuine regard which Dennie held for his older friend.

During the first two decades of the nineteenth century, then, Abercrombie's activities won for him recognition and prominence in the literary, educational, and religious life of Philadelphia. His interest in public speaking and reading, as well as the importance he attached to the study of speech as it was indicated in the plan for an English education in the Philadelphia Academy, give his contributions significance in a study of the development of rhetorical theory in America.

⁴⁰Port Folio, III (1803), 181.

⁴¹Port Folio, IV (1804), 253.

⁴²Port Folio, IV (1804), 269.

⁴³Port Folio, V (1808), 158.

⁴⁴Port Folio, VI (1808), 132.

CHAPTER II

ABERCROMBIE'S SPEECH THEORY:

EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

In the spring of 1800 with the Reverend Dr. Samuel Magaw, Rector of St. Paul's Church, James Abercrombie founded the Philadelphia Academy. From its establishment the program of study in this institution followed the pattern of an English academy, an educational system which recognized as basic in the curriculum a study of the English language. The academy reflected Abercrombie's acceptance of this emphasis, and as well formed the academic context for the expression of his educational and rhetorical theories. This chapter will examine the background of the concept of an English education, and the specific program of study followed in the Philadelphia Academy under Abercrombie's leadership, in order to reconstruct the academic environment in which his theory of rhetoric developed.

Slightly more than fifty years before the establishment of the Philadelphia Academy, in 1749, Benjamin Franklin published a pamphlet entitled Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Philadelphia¹ which, it was hoped, would give impetus to the establishment of an academy designed to provide a useful and ornamental education to a deserving young populace.² The proposed institution was to include both a classical department, under the rector, and an English department, under the English master. In the pamphlet Franklin recommends study in the following areas: writing and drawing, mathematics, English grammar, reading, composition, pronunciation, history, geography, classical studies, and morality. He bases his proposals on the writings of men well known to his public as educational theorists, among whom were Charles Rollen,³ John Milton,⁴ John Locke,⁵ Obidiah Walker,⁶ and George

¹Benjamin Franklin, Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Philadelphia (Philadelphia: 1749) in Leonard W. Laboree (ed.), The Papers of Benjamin Franklin (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961) III, 395-421.

²Ibid., p. 404.

³The Method of Studying and Teaching the Belles Lettres, 3 vols., 6th ed. (London: 1769).

⁴Tractate on Education (London: 1721).

⁵Some Thoughts Concerning Education (London: 1745).

⁶Of Education, Especially of Young Gentlemen (Oxford: 1687).

Turnbull.⁷ To substantiate the importance of studying English grammar, he cites the following statement from Locke's Some Thoughts Concerning Education (1745):

He (the gentleman) ought to study Grammar, among the other helps of Speaking well, but it must be the Grammar of His Own Tongue, of the Language he uses, that he may understand his own Country Speech nicely, and speak it properly. . . . It. . . [is a] matter of Wonder, why young Gentlemen are forc'd to learn the Grammars of foreign and dead Languages, and are never once told of the Grammar of their own Tongue.⁸

In his proposals Franklin urges inclusion of studies designed to increase the students' skill in reading and speaking. About reading he observes, "Reading should also be taught, and pronouncing, properly, distinctly, emphatically; not with an even Tone, which under-does, nor a theatrical, which over-does Nature."⁹ In the academy the students are to improve their pronunciation [delivery] by ". . . making Declamations, repeating Speeches, delivering

⁷Observations upon Liberal Education, in All Its Branches (London: 1742).

⁸Franklin, op. cit., p. 405. The editors note: "B. F. characteristically quoted his authorities with casual accuracy, altering and telescoping sentences and paragraphs, italicizing and capitalizing to suit his mood and promote his purpose, rather than to make a display of pedantic literalness." (p. 398).

⁹Ibid., p. 407.

Orations, &c. The Tutor assisting at the Rehearsals, teaching, advising, correcting their Accent, &c."¹⁰ In his notes he defines pronunciation as ". . .the proper Modulation of the Voice, to suit the Subject with due Emphasis, Action, &c." He continues, "In delivering a discourse in Publick, design'd to persuade, the Manner, perhaps, contributes more to Success, than either the Matter or Method. Yet the two latter seem to engross the Attention of most Preachers and other Publick Speakers, and the former to be almost totally neglected."¹¹

When on November 13, 1749, the Constitution of the Publick Academy of the City of Philadelphia was signed,¹² many of the proposals included in Franklin's plan were incorporated into the structure of the institution. "Rhetorick and oratory" were to be studied under the direction both of the Rector and the English master, while the latter was to teach as well "The English Tongue, grammatically and as a Language."¹³

¹⁰Ibid., p. 410.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Benjamin Franklin, Constitutions of the Academy of Philadelphia, in Papers, III, 421-429.

¹³Ibid., p. 425.

Franklin's Proposals helped establish a sound program of secondary education in the academy and in an institution of higher learning which was later to merge with the College of Philadelphia to form the University of Pennsylvania.¹⁴ Since Abercrombie was a native Philadelphian and a graduate of the College of Philadelphia, he had opportunities to observe the successes and values of this educational venture. It is not unusual, then, that his efforts bear close resemblance to those of Benjamin Franklin in support of a useful and ornamental English education.

Known to Abercrombie as well were the writings of several intellectual leaders of the eighteenth century whose studies were directed toward a reformation in educational theory. Essentially these writers, among whom were Samuel Johnson,¹⁵ Thomas

¹⁴Paul Monroe, "Education," The Cambridge History of American Literature, ed. W. P. Trent, John Erskine, S. P. Sherman and Carl Van Doren (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1933), III, 393.

¹⁵Samuel Johnson, 1709-1784, was a lexicographer and noted British man of letters. His interest in the English language and its study made his writings of particular interest to Abercrombie who published in 1811 a prospectus for an American edition of Johnson's works. The War of 1812 prohibited the completion of this project. Throughout his lectures Abercrombie credited Johnson for contributions to the study of the English language, particularly in the areas of articulation and pronunciation. Cf. Port Folio, I (1809), 373.

Sheridan,¹⁶ David Hume,¹⁷ Henry Home, or Lord Kames,¹⁸ and Hugh Blair,¹⁹ advocated an emphasis upon the study of the English language as of value alike to those whose vocational aspirations did not necessitate knowledge of the classical languages and to those who would continue their studies in the traditional university context. While their suggestions with respect to standardizing English spelling, pronunciation, diction and idiom

¹⁶ Thomas Sheridan, 1719-1788, an actor and orthoepist, advocated educational reforms which involved principally the study of the English language and 'the arts of reading and public speaking.' His educational theories were expressed in various editions of his works on elocution to which Abercrombie made frequent reference in both the Compend and the lectures.

¹⁷ David Hume, 1711-1776, is primarily remembered as philosopher and historian. In his essays, however, he called attention to deficiencies in the educational system of his day, and proposed studies designed to improve eloquence. Abercrombie referred to Hume in the lectures as a "celebrated modern" historian. Port Folio, III (1810), 488.

¹⁸ Henry Home, Lord Kames, 1696-1782, a Scottish judge, published in 1762 Elements of Criticism (sometimes referred to as Elements of Rhetoric), a work on the art of composition which directed the student of language to an understanding of its basis in human nature. In his lecture on tones, Abercrombie suggested continued study in the "...lectures of Mr. Sheridan and Dr. Blair, and the Essays of Lord Kames [sic]" Port Folio, III (1810), 151.

¹⁹ The Reverend Hugh Blair, 1718-1800, lectured on composition in Edinburgh as professor of rhetoric and belles lettres. Blair's lectures are cited throughout Abercrombie's works.

could not be implemented,²⁰ their efforts focused attention upon the English language as a legitimate and profitable area of study. Their insistence on the values of understanding language as a spoken medium of expression resulted in an encouragement of public speaking and of the art of reading.²¹

Almost certainly Abercrombie knew the collection of writings designed for use in preparatory schools, The Preceptor, published by Robert Dodsley.²² Guthrie observes that the work was introduced at Harvard and Pennsylvania shortly after its publication.²³ Since the preface to the volume had been written by Samuel Johnson,²⁴ it would have been of particular interest to Abercrombie. In discussing the plan of education which the text was designed to facilitate, Johnson outlines his own educational theories.

First, he objects to the study of an "unknown tongue" as an

²⁰J. W. Adamson, "Education," The Cambridge History of English Literature, ed. Sir A. W. Ward and A. R. Waller (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1933), XIV, 443.

²¹Ibid., p. 444.

²²Robert Dodsley, The Preceptor (London: 1748). The volume appeared in eight English editions.

²³Warren Guthrie, "Rhetorical Theory in Colonial America," A History of Speech Education in America, ed. Karl R. Wallace (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1954), p. 55.

²⁴Allen T. Hazen, Samuel Johnson's Prefaces & Dedications, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937), pp. 171-189.

essential adjunct to the assimilation of other already difficult subjects. He favors Dodsley's search for exact, scientific treatises written in English for use by students already proficient in their native language. The writings, Johnson continues, were selected, not with a view to gathering all desirable knowledge, but to include the ". . . many characters and employments indispensably required; and the Choice was determined not by the Splendor of any Part of Literature, but by the Extent of its Use, and the Inconvenience which its neglect was likely to produce."²⁵

Concluding his preliminary observations, Johnson introduces each section by commenting upon the necessity for its inclusion and the importance of studying each. Part I is devoted to the ". . . humble Purposes of teaching to Read, and Speak, and write Letters. . . ." It consists of various ". . . exemplifications of such Differences of Stile as require correspondent Diversities of Pronunciation. . . ."²⁶ The three forms of style necessitate three modes of Elocution:²⁷ the Familiar, the Solemn, and the

²⁵Ibid., p. 180.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Elocution as used here is synonymous with pronunciation and the term delivery, presently used.

Pathetic. These modes he defines, as follows:

That in the Familiar, he that reads is only to talk with a paper in his Hand, and to indulge himself in all the lighter Liberties of Voice, as when he reads the common Articles of newspaper, or a cursory Letter of Intelligence or Business. That the Solemn stile, such as that of a serious Narrative, expects an uniform Steadiness of Speech, equal, clear and calm. That for the Pathetic, such as an animated Oration, it is necessary the Voice be regulated by the Sense, varying and rising with the Passions.²⁸

Johnson urges that these rules and others which derive from them be adapted to each individual's needs. He admonishes the reader as well to ". . . inculcate strongly to every Scholar the Danger of copying the voice of another; an attempt, which though it has been often repeated, is always unsuccessful."²⁹

Part V of the Preceptor presents a treatise on rhetoric and poetry which formed an introduction to English composition. Johnson observes, "In the Practice of these great Arts, so much more is the Gift of Nature than the effect of education, that nothing is Attempted here but to teach the Mind some general Heads of Observation, to which the beautiful Passages of the best

²⁸Hazen, loc. cit.

²⁹Ibid.

writers may commonly be reduced."³⁰ He urges the instructors to inculcate the meaning of each stylistic device studied by having the student find or employ each in his exercises. "For a farther [sic] Progress in these studies," he suggests, "they [the students] may consult Quintilian and Vossius's Rhetoric. . . ."³¹

The study of Logic, or ". . . the art of arranging and connecting Ideas, of forming and examining Arguments. . . ."³² is the seventh part of Dodsley's Preceptor. Johnson cautions against the projection of an "art of wrangling" and suggests that the study be immediately implemented in both conversation and in the examination of other subject matter included in the students' program of studies.³³

An examination of the plan of the Preceptor reveals those elements of education which both Dodsley and Johnson considered important. The divisions are, as follows:

³⁰Ibid., p. 183.

³¹Ibid., p. 184. Guthrie, (op. cit., p. 51), observed: "Vossius' rhetoric treated of an art. . . allied to classical concepts Although Vossius. . . treats mostly of trope and figure, there is a fairly adequate discussion of invention, disposition, and pronunciation as well.

³²Hazen, loc. cit.

³³Ibid., p. 185.

- I. Reading, Speaking, Writing Letters
- II. Geometry
- III. Geography and Astronomy
- IV. Chronology and History
- V. Rhetoric and Poetry
- VI. Drawing
- VII. Logic
- VIII. Natural History
- IX. Ethics or Morality
- X. Trade and Commerce
- XI. Laws and Government
- XII. Human Life and Manners

A comparison of this scheme of studies with that of Benjamin Franklin reveals marked similarities. Indeed, Theodore Hornberger has interestingly proposed that Johnson's preface to the Preceptor has had a demonstrable influence upon the development of American educational theory. Comparing the educational sentiments reflected in Johnson's preface with those of Franklin and Provost William Smith, first Provost of the College of Philadelphia, who framed its early, influential curriculum in 1756, Hornberger calls attention to the marked similarity among the three. He observes,

The argument, in brief, is that The Preceptor in general, and Johnson's preface in particular, provided Provost William Smith with both method

and material for his famous curriculum, or system of education first published in the Pennsylvania Gazette of August 12, 1756.³⁴

He notes the similarity as well between the Johnson preface and Franklin's proposals, terming it an "extraordinary agreement in spirit." He finds that Dr. Johnson anticipated Franklin in those opinions which are often thought of as most typically of the latter: an insistence upon practicality in education, a belief that English should be the medium of instruction, and a conviction that the arousal of interest is the first duty of the educator.³⁵

In his discussion of Johnson's preface, Hazen also identifies the authors of the divisions of The Preceptor. Of particular interest are his findings relative to Parts I, V, and VII.

Part I, Section II, On Speaking

There are thirteen speeches selected from the first four books of Nathaniel Hooke's Roman History (1738-45). Then there are ten selections from Shakespeare, and passages from Pope, Gay, and Milton.

Part V, On Rhetoric and Poetry

With slight alterations, it is from the second part of Anthony Blackwall's Introduction to the Classics (1718, sixth edition 1746).

³⁴Theodore Hornberger, "A Note on the Probable Source of Provost William Smith's Famous Curriculum for the College of Philadelphia," The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, LVIII (1934), 370.

³⁵Ibid., 376.

Part VII, On Logic

The first publication William Duncan's Elements of Logic. This was published separately on June 17, 1748, and was many times reprinted.³⁶

The second and later editions of The Preceptor include as an introduction to Part I the substance of John Mason's Essay on Elocution.³⁷

Guthrie cites the importance of this addition in its giving Mason's Essay wide distribution in the United States.³⁸

With Johnson's preface, The Preceptor was to exercise a pronounced influence upon the development of rhetorical thought in the United States. Its importance in the formation of the educational views of Abercrombie and his Philadelphia contemporaries will be readily ascertained through an examination of their educational programs and the importance which they assigned the study of English in both its written and spoken forms.

A second writer who influenced Abercrombie's theory of education was Thomas Sheridan, whose Lectures on Elocution was among the sources for Abercrombie's lectures and the Compend. In 1756 Sheridan published a work entitled British Education in

³⁶Hazen, op. cit., p. 173.

³⁷Ibid., p. 174.

³⁸Guthrie, op. cit., p. 55.

which he advocated educational reform, the stabilization of the English language, and the encouragement of public speaking and oral reading.³⁹ The work contains extensive references to the writings of Locke and Milton, sources also acknowledged by Franklin. In the introductory discourse to his Lectures on Elocution, after citing Locke's Essay on Education and agreeing with his belief that the study of English was neglected, Sheridan objects to Locke's analysis of the cause of this neglect. He states, "But he [Locke] lays the fault at the wrong door, when he imputes this neglect to the master of grammar schools, and tutors at the universities. They neither profess to teach it, [the English language] nor do they know how. Nothing effectual can be done without making that a distinct branch of education, and encouraging proper masters to follow it as their sole employment in the same way as the several masters in the other branches do."⁴⁰

Adamson suggests that Sheridan expected his educational reforms to effect the political, religious, moral and aesthetic redemption of

³⁹ J. W. Adamson, "Education," The Cambridge History of English Literature, ed. Sir A. W. Ward and A. R. Waller (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1933), XIV, 443.

⁴⁰ Thomas Sheridan, Lectures on Elocution, Reading, &c. (Dublin: Samuel Whyte, 1775), p. v.

society through the introduction of rhetoric and elocution into the ordinary school and college course, and through the critical discussion which would follow.⁴¹ He summarizes Sheridan's contribution to education, as follows:

He was one of the earliest students of English prosody, phonetics and spelling-reform; by insisting that language is primarily and essentially a thing spoken, not written, he anticipated the principle underlying recent changes in language teaching.⁴²

While it is not known that Abercrombie's educational theory was influenced directly by Sheridan's treatise, British Education, the inclusion of his educational reform views in his works on elocution indicated that Abercrombie's insistence on the importance of studying the English language may have derived in part from Sheridan's writings. That Abercrombie's educational philosophy agreed with Sheridan's is obvious.

At about the same time Sheridan's efforts were directed toward educational reform, what has been called the "Scottish School of Rhetoric" began to exert a similar influence. The writings of Hume, Kames, and Blair were influential in attaining the recognition of the vernacular as an educational instrument.

⁴¹Adamson, op. cit., p. 443.

⁴²Ibid., p. 444.

Among the essays of David Hume which were published in 1742 is one entitled "Of Eloquence." In this work he obliquely attacks the educational system of his day through his insistence that the youth were gaining little from their academic experience to help them become eloquent, and little practical encouragement from their contemporaries through excellence in public speaking. He contrasts his civilization with that of ancient Greece and Rome and observes, ". . .if we be superior in philosophy, we are still inferior in eloquence."⁴³ Among his contemporaries he finds that ". . .none. . . have attained much beyond a mediocrity in their art, and that species of eloquence, which they aspire to, gives no exercise to the sublimer faculties of the mind, but may be reached by ordinary talents and a slight application." The speakers of his time, Hume continues, employ none of the stylistic devices which characterized the greatest among the orators of ancient times--the apostrophe and other "bold and poetical figures." They have not learned to conceal under a torrent of eloquence the artifice by which they could ". . .inflame an audience and make them accompany the speaker in such violent passions, and such elevated conceptions. . . ." ⁴⁴ It is his opinion

⁴³ David Hume, Essays Moral, Political and Literary (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1875), I, 164.

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 165-166.

that eloquence demands vehemence of thought and expression accompanied by vehemence of action. His generation failed in both regards. Although England is a learned nation with a popular government, he maintains ". . . our progress in eloquence is very inconsiderable in comparison of the advances which we have made in all other parts of learning."⁴⁵

Hume rejects the causes offered to explain this disparity between eloquence of the ancients and that of a free government and an enlightened populace in Britain during his time. The causes proffered and dismissed may be summarized, as follows:

1. That a multiplicity of laws prohibited attention to eloquence because of the concern demanded by the legal processes.

2. That the superior good sense of the moderns rejected all rhetorical appeals to the emotions.

3. That the issues arising from the disorder of government and the enormous crimes of citizens in the classical era afforded ampler matter for eloquence than those of the present age.⁴⁶

The first of these Hume dismisses as pertaining only to forensic rhetoric and not to deliberative. Its application to the former he finds insufficient to negate attention to the manner of utterance. In regard to the use of emotional proof, he suggests that caution and

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 167.

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 167-170.

reserve should be employed in speaking, necessitating that the orators ". . . redouble their art, not abandon it entirely."⁴⁷

He advocates that the speaker feel a genuine emotional response, and then communicate this response--anger, indignation, pity, or sorrow--to his audience. His disagreement with the third suggestion that the corruption of government and the enormity of the citizens' crimes demanded greater eloquence among the Greeks and Romans is tersely stated: "It would be easy to find a Philip in modern times, but where shall we find a Demosthenes?"⁴⁸

Eloquence, Hume feels, was lacking among his contemporaries from either the "want of genius, or of judgement in our speakers, who either found themselves incapable of reaching the heights of ancient eloquence, or rejected all such endeavours as unsuitable to the spirit of modern assemblies."⁴⁹

How should these inadequacies be countered? He suggests that orators need to become aware of the importance of preparation, the possibilities of eloquent expression and delivery, and the cultivation in English of the stylistic modes admired in Greek and

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 169.

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 169-170.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 170.

Latin. Hume discourages dependence upon extemporaneous delivery and suggests that ". . . a public speaker must know before hand the question under debate. He may compose all the arguments, objections, and answers, such as he thinks will be proper for his discourse. If anything new occurs he may supply it from his invention. . . ." ⁵⁰

The whole production will, then, be characterized by the impetus and force of conviction and understanding.

Rhetoric assumes an important place in Hume's thinking. His high estimation of eloquence and his criticism of the failure of the educational system of his day to provide training in speaking made an impact upon those institutions and educators already advocating reform. The Scottish school of rhetorical thought accepted Hume's ideas as concepts complementary to their insistence upon training in the English language through both written composition and oral communication.

Another Scot interested in the idea of an English education was Lord Kames, (Henry Home). His Elements of Criticism (or Rhetoric), first published in 1762, was often reprinted, and various

⁵⁰
Ibid., p. 173.

editors published versions of it well into the nineteenth century.⁵¹

In the work of Kames the belles lettres tradition received early, more complete expression than had been previously attempted. Kames' Elements of Criticism represented no direct effort to reform education, as did, for instance, Sheridan's treatises. Viewed, however, with the writings of Blair its importance in establishing the belles lettres concept of rhetoric in the teaching of oral as well as written English should not be minimized. In Kames's understanding, rhetoric became one facet of the broad field of belles lettres or fine literature. Thomas De Quincey's understanding of this concept represents the normative view. In this tradition rhetoric became a part of ". . . the Science of Literature, or Literary Theory and Literary Criticism universally. . . [including] the principles of Historical Writing, Poetry, and Expository Writing as well as of Oratory."⁵² The language arts--all having a common foundation in words--included, then, rhetoric, composition, and criticism. The emphasis became predominantly literary, and in its growth to

⁵¹ Henry Home, Lord Kames, Elements of Criticism, ed. Abraham Mills (New York: Mason Brothers, 1868). Other American editions include those of James R. Boyd (New York: A. S. Barnes & Company, 1874). Boyd included Blair's lecture upon the "Standard of Taste," and omitted one dealing with the same subject written by Kames.

⁵² The Collected Writings of Thomas De Quincey, ed. David Masson, 14 vols. (London, 1896-7), X, 85.

dominance among the rhetorical theories, this emphasis obscured the early shared prominence given to oral communication, and style became the important consideration, while invention and the other classical canons in time came to be of less significance. In the writings of Kames, however, this change in emphasis was not evident. While it is true that he set up rules governing both composition and criticism, at the same time, he devotes approximately one sixth of his work to a consideration of the beauty of language as perceived through the sounds of words.⁵³

Development in more than one direction from Kames' writings was conceivable. A departure from the central Aristotelian principle--invention, as it was considered pivotal within his rhetorical system--was one of these. The movement toward a renewed appreciation of the English language in education was another. For Abercrombie and those educational theorists advocating an English education, the second of these was of greater significance. Invention, although incidental in rhetoric, was given specific attention in the study of logic in the Philadelphia Academy. While rhetoric involved primarily style and delivery, and incidentally arrangement, logic, with its examination of argument and analysis, served to introduce invention into the students' program of liberal studies.

⁵³Kames, op. cit., pp. 247-325.

Hugh Blair's Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres,⁵⁴ treats the components of the belles lettres rhetoric--taste, criticism, language, and style. From a discussion of how rhetoric is implemented in written and oral forms, he moves to an examination of the subjects upon which these elements are applied--public speaking, historical writing, philosophical writing, poetry, tragedy, and comedy.

He introduces his consideration of public speaking or eloquence by tracing the history of the art from its beginnings in ancient Greece through its degeneration with the loss of freedom in the decadence of the later Roman Empire. In his own day he found poets and historians of note, but no orators of consequence. The reasons which he cites for this oratorical void are similar to those noted by Hume. They are, as follows: (1) fear of being deceived by oratorical "tricks"; (2) arbitrary power of the throne and later ministerial control which hampered debate in deliberative assemblies; (3) the complicated state of law which prohibited judicial eloquence; and (4) the practice of reading sermons, which deterred the development of pulpit eloquence.⁵⁵ After discussing the three

⁵⁴ Hugh Blair, Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres (8th ed.; New York: Collins and Co., 1819).

⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 208-211.

kinds of eloquence--legislative, legal, and pulpit--and the general considerations, arrangement and delivery, he turns to a treatment of the means of improving in eloquence. It is in this discussion that his views of the orator's training are given explicit expression.

Blair states his intention for this section of his work as follows:

"Before I finish this subject [rhetoric], it may be of use to suggest some things concerning the properest means of Improvement in the Art of Public Speaking, and the most necessary studies for that purpose."⁵⁶ Blair recognizes that the composition of a "florid harangue" on a popular topic, wittily delivered, required little from the speaker. But, he continues, ". . . the idea which I have endeavoured to give of eloquence, is much higher. It is a great exertion of the human powers."⁵⁷ His definition of oratory follows:

It is the art of being persuasive and commanding, the art, not of pleasing the fancy, merely, but of speaking both to the understanding and to the heart; of interesting the hearers in such a degree as to seize and carry them along with us; and to leave them with a deep and strong impression of what they have heard.⁵⁸

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 424. Abercrombie introduced Blair's Dissertation on the Means of Improving in Eloquence" in his first lecture, in which he quoted Blair's commendation of debating or speaking societies. Port Folio, I (1809), 207.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Ibid., pp. 424-425.

The qualities of the perfect and accomplished orator demanded by this definition he lists, as follows: a strong, lively, warm imagination, quick sensibility of heart, solid judgment, good sense and presence of mind. These, he feels, are interior requirements. They are to be improved by "great and long attention" to style and composition. The exterior qualifications--"a graceful manner, a presence not ungainly, and a full and tuneable voice"--are to support the interior qualities in enabling the orator to accomplish the aims associated with his office. Should the speaker fail to reach the ultimate heights of his art, even moderate accomplishments may receive public approbation, since the perfect and accomplished orator rarely appears. While the orator must be dependent upon nature for certain of his talents, study and discipline are essential to the development of eloquence.⁵⁹

With this transitional idea, Blair continues his discussion by indicating the attributes of the orator which are acquired and cultivated. First, the man of eloquence must aspire to high morality and virtue. Blair's endorsement of the rhetorical theories of Quintilian,⁶⁰ parallels his understanding of the importance in speaking well of the moral character of the speaker. The second requirement which he offers to his students and readers is the acquisition of a

⁵⁹Ibid., pp. 425-426.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 445.

fund of knowledge. He observes, "There is no art that can teach one to be eloquent, in any sphere, without sufficient acquaintance with what belongs to that sphere. . . ." ⁶¹ He admonishes his readers to give attention to style, composition, and all the arts of speech. In addition they are to become familiar with the "general circle of polite literature," with poetry and history. Specific preparation for speaking must follow the assimilation of a general understanding and appreciation for "polite literature" to provide for the speaker his "material for argument."

Blair urges his readers to cultivate the habit of application and industry, to give attention to the best models, and finally, to engage in frequent exercises in both composing and speaking. In the consideration of the last of these, he encourages the voluntary association of students, according to their academic interests, into societies which would foster interest in and provide opportunities for public speaking. ⁶² For these meetings he has definite advice. He advocates that they attend to their choice of subject for discussion; it is to be useful and manly. Second, he urges that the students be "temperate in the practice of speaking." They are ". . . not to

⁶¹Ibid., p. 432.

⁶²Ibid., p. 440.

speak too often, nor on subjects where they are ignorant or unripe; but only when they have proper material for a discourse, and have digested and thought of the subject beforehand."⁶³ Next, the students are charged to avoid ostentation in eloquence, or to "use good sense." Finally, in subjects susceptible to more than one opinion, the students are told to speak on the side of their conviction.

As he closes his discussion of the ways of improving in eloquence, Blair endorses for his readers the study of the ancient writers on eloquence--Aristotle, Cicero, and particularly Quintilian.

Direct references to each of these writers in his Compend of Elocution and in his "Lectures on the Arts of Reading and Public Speaking" indicate Abercrombie's familiarity with the theories of Johnson, Sheridan, Hume, Kames and Blair. His acceptance of their educational reform views, his knowledge of the academic ideals of Franklin as they were implemented in Philadelphia institutions, and his own professional interest in the study of the arts of reading and public speaking resulted in the distinctive pattern of instruction which he began in the Philadelphia Academy. Since this institution was the specific educational environment for Abercrombie's speech theory, an examination of the program of study followed in the academy was essential to a complete understanding of his contri-

⁶³Ibid., p. 442.

bution to the development of rhetorical theory in America.

From its establishment the Philadelphia Academy followed the pattern of an English academy, similar to the academic program proposed by Franklin. Writing in the Port Folio of October 1801, Dennie declares that the ". . . system adopted in this seminary. . . is believed to be as complete as any hitherto attempted."⁶⁴

During the first three years of its existence the plan of the academy as directed by both Abercrombie and Magaw was ambitious indeed. There were three departments of instruction: the classical, the English and the mathematics departments. Abercrombie headed the program of English studies. The students were given instruction in grammar, composition, and elocution, "both with respect to the arts of reading and speaking."⁶⁵ Under the guidance of Dr. Magaw, who had served as Vice Provost of the University of Pennsylvania from 1789 to 1791,⁶⁶ the young men studied Greek and Latin, logic and moral science.⁶⁷

⁶⁴Joseph Dennie, "The Philadelphia Academy," Port Folio, I (1801), 345.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Persifor Frazer, ed., University of Pennsylvania Biographical Catalogue of the Matriculates of the College, 1749-1893 (Philadelphia: Anvil Printing Co., 1894), p. xix.

⁶⁷Dennie, "Philadelphia Academy," loc. cit.

A Mr. Delamar, formerly professor of mathematics in the Royal Academy of Dublin taught the mathematics courses, while Mr. Francis Gallet served as an instructor in French. Attention was regularly given to religious instruction; on Saturdays the students were required to study the catechisms of their churches.⁶⁸

In the advertisement which introduces his Compends⁶⁹ published in 1803 on elocution and natural history, Abercrombie sketched the plan of the school and indicated the textbooks which were being used during the period. An English Grammar,⁷⁰ by Lindley Murray, whose textbooks were greatly admired by Abercrombie, guided the study of grammar, while the class in composition studied "Irvine's [sic] Elements of Composition."⁷¹ Abercrombie cited "Andrews'

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 246.

⁶⁹James Abercrombie, Two Compends. . .I. Of Elocution, II. Of Natural History (Philadelphia: William Fry, 1803), p. iii.

⁷⁰Abercrombie noted that "Murray's large Grammar and Exercises, with the Abridgement for the use of beginners, fully accomodated that department." It is likely that he was referring to the following editions of Murray's textbooks as they are listed in Ralph R. Shaw and Richard H. Shoemaker, American Bibliography, 1801-1810 (New York: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1958-61): English Grammar, adapted to the Different Classes of Learners (Philadelphia: B. Johnson, 1803), An Abridgement of L. Murray's English Grammar (Philadelphia: Benjamin and Jacob Johnson, 1802), and The English Reader, 3rd Philadelphia Edition (Philadelphia: B. & J. Johnson, 1801).

⁷¹Abercrombie, Compend, op. cit., p. iv. The text referred to is likely that of David Irving, The Elements of English Composition (Philadelphia: Thomas L. Plowman, 1803).

excellent Compend of Logic, now in use in the University (of Pennsylvania), and lately adopted by Princeton College. . . ."⁷²

as the textbook in that area. Abercrombie found that no textbooks in elocution or natural history suited his students' needs, and consequently he prepared two compends for these classes.

If the plan was ambitious, it appeared to Dennie that it was eminently praiseworthy. He informed the readers of the Port Folio that, while the school was less than a year old, ". . . the number of pupils has, in. . . this brief period, amounted to one hundred."⁷³

He continues:

As the directors unremittingly devote the customary hours of tuition to the superintendence of this infant seminary; as their industry is unwearied, and their talents unquestionable; as the means they employ are competent and wise, and the end one of the most noble and beneficent, which can be suggested by the human mind, it is almost superfluous to add, that they have a claim upon the attention of parents and a fair right to anticipate patronage from many and respect from all.⁷⁴

It was the absence of strong financial patronage, however, which necessitated a modification of the academy's program of

⁷²Ibid. The text referred to is: John Andrews, A Compend of Logick for Use of the University of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia: T. Dobson, 1801).

⁷³Dennie, "Philadelphia Academy," op. cit., p. 246.

⁷⁴Ibid.

instruction in 1803. On February 15, Dr. Magaw resigned and Abercrombie assumed the sole direction of the school.⁷⁵ He remained director of the academy until 1817 when he resigned to give his full attention to his duties as Assistant Minister of the United Churches of Christ and St. Peter's.⁷⁶ During the years of Abercrombie's leadership the academy became well known in Philadelphia for the excellence of its academic program as an English academy.

Supplementing an understanding of the program of the academy as it was presented in the Port Folio and in Abercrombie's writings was a valuable commentary upon the educational philosophy of the academy provided in the charges which the headmaster delivered annually to the graduating classes. In these addresses Abercrombie frequently commented upon the design of the institution's academic program. These statements indicated that in the educational structure of the academy a study of the English language was the unifying factor.

In 1804, at the first graduation ceremony, Abercrombie observes, "Those branches of knowledge, to which your attention has been particularly directed in this seminary, form, in my opinion, the outlines

⁷⁵ Joseph Dennie, "Sketch of the Life of the Reverend James Abercrombie," Port Folio, IV (1810), 394.

⁷⁶ William B. Sprague, Annals of the American Pulpit (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1859), V, 393.

of a complete English education, accomodated to the circumstances of the country of which you are natives. . . ." He continued by noting that ". . .the groundwork of a correct education should be formed of English literature. . . ." ⁷⁷

A study of grammar in which the students were taught the nature, power and construction of the English language was presented according to the authority of Murray, Harris, Johnson, Lowth, Priestly, Beattie, Sheridan, Walker and "other eminent writers upon that subject." Composition, the next step in language study, Abercrombie defines as the correct disposition of sentences so as to form discourse. Within the compass of this part of his plan of studies was an examination of the qualities and different species of style--the various ornaments of which language is capable and the established rules of criticism. The whole involved, then, ". . .the proper mode of conveying. . .ideas clearly to the minds of others, and, at the same time, of clothing them in an advantageous dress."

Following the pattern of the earlier proponents of an English education, Abercrombie stresses the importance of language understood essentially as an oral medium. The description of his educational formula includes, therefore, the study of oral communication. He summarizes this phase of the students' training, as follows:

⁷⁷James Abercrombie, "A Charge," Port Folio, IV (1804), 253.

Having thus considered the matter of which language is composed, you were led to consider the manner, in which it is to be communicated to others with grace, propriety, energy, and ease. Your epitome of Elocution consequently including the art of Reading and the art of Speaking, including the management of the different inflexions of the human voice, the proper use of accent, emphasis, and pauses, and the power of expression, communicated by tones, looks, and gestures.⁷⁸

The importance which Abercrombie attached to this phase of the students' program prompted his observing in the charge delivered to the class of 1806: "This branch of your education is of the most essential importance to you, from the peculiar organization of our general government, which opens every avenue for the successful display of genuine talents, and particularly for the acquisition of wealth and fame, by the exercise of correct and graceful elocution."

Abercrombie gives particular importance in the charges to a discussion of the study of logic in the system of education followed at the Philadelphia Academy. He defines logic as a study of the "faculties of the human mind, and their operation in apprehending, judging, reasoning, and arranging. . . thoughts." He advises continued study of logic because, "It will teach you to form just and incontrovertible arguments on every subject--to detect in others the plausible deception of false arguments--to supply, and consequently to ascertain, the correctness of the enthymemes used in common

⁷⁸Ibid.

conversation, and, on all occasions, not only to detect the delusions of sophistry, but to support your sentiments with that conviction of strength which none but the scholar can teach you most easily and effectually to exert." The effectual defense of truth and the detection of artifice and error are facilitated, Abercrombie maintains, by a study of logic.⁷⁹

The purpose of the Philadelphia Academy then, as it was revealed in the plan of the academic program of the institution and in Abercrombie's charges, was to introduce to students studies which would prepare them for immediately assuming a place in the business life of their city or for continuing their studies at the university level. Following the belles lettres tradition Abercrombie planned the curriculum of the academy with the recognition that language skills in written and oral communication were necessary to each level and each area of study. His plan was not unique. His dependence upon the writings of Sheridan, Johnson, Franklin, and others who championed the values of an English education is recognized. His contributions may be delineated in terms of his time and locale, his success, and his insistence that skill in oral reading and public speaking should be developed along with the assimilation of other necessary subjects. The graduate of this program of study, like

⁷⁹James Abercrombie, "A Charge," Port Folio, II (1806), 58.

the accomplished orator of Cicero, was one liberally educated whose gifts of eloquence had been cultivated. It is not surprising that Abercrombie's contributions to the development of American rhetorical theory were characterized by balance and sensitivity to natural communication when the educational environment he planned is considered.

CHAPTER III

ABERCROMBIE'S SPEECH THEORY:

THE BELLES LETTRES TRADITION IN PHILADELPHIA

James Abercrombie completed the Compend on Elocution in 1803. He wrote the lectures on reading and public speaking during the winter of 1806,¹ presented them that year in the Philadelphia Academy and in 1807 in the hall of the University of Pennsylvania, and published them beginning in 1809 in the Port Folio.² These writings reflect an interest in the study of speech which pervaded the academic programs of colonial colleges and universities. In order to understand how Abercrombie's works related to those of his contemporaries it was necessary to examine two questions. First, in a reconstruction of the development of rhetorical theory in the United States, how do Abercrombie's writings differ from

¹James Abercrombie, "Lectures on the Arts of Reading and Public Speaking," Port Folio, I (1809), 102.

²Ibid.

other early American contributions? And second, what was the nature of the theoretical environment which resulted in Abercrombie's adherence to the belles lettres tradition of oral expression?

John Witherspoon is generally credited with having written the first complete treatment of rhetoric produced in this country.³ He composed his Lectures on Moral Philosophy and Eloquence during his term as president of Princeton, 1768-1794.⁴ While it is true that they represent an early original contribution to the development of American rhetorical theory, Witherspoon's lectures were limited in their immediate effect upon that development.

A second major work, John Quincy Adams' Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory, published in 1810, is similar to Witherspoon's rhetoric, and reflects the same limitation. Both treatments were based upon classical writings--those of Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian. However, as Hoshor observes, this emphasis ". . . failed to re-establish the classical trend as a major movement--as indicated by the tremendous popularity of the elocutionary movement which

³ Warren Guthrie, "Rhetorical Theory in Colonial America," A History of Speech Education in America, ed. Karl R. Wallace (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1954), p. 56.

⁴Ibid., p. 59.

was soon to follow."⁵

In contrast to his contemporaries Adams and Witherspoon, Abercrombie wrote from an acknowledged awareness of an appreciation for the British rhetorical theorists of his period. He should not, however, be considered as the first of the American elocutionists. The basis for his writings in rhetoric derived from the belles lettres movement, and represented not so much an analysis of delivery, per se, as a presentation of principles of expression derived from the writings of those insistent upon the study of the English language in both its spoken and written forms.

Abercrombie, moreover, did not write in intellectual seclusion. The belles lettres tradition had been popular in Philadelphia beginning with the establishment of higher education in the city. In 1753 Ebenezer Kinnersley became professor of oratory and English literature at the University of Pennsylvania.⁶ Kinnersley established the speech exercises found in the colonial colleges--engaging in forensic disputations and delivering orations--but departed from the traditional university approach by advocating the use of the English language in these exercises. Upon Professor Kinnersley's retirement in 1772,

⁵ John P. Hoshor, "American Contributions to Rhetorical Theory and Homiletics," Wallace, op. cit., p. 130.

⁶ Persifor Frazer (ed.), University of Pennsylvania Biographical Catalogue of the Matriculates of the College, 1749-1893 (Philadelphia: Anvil Printing Company, 1894), p. v.

oratorical exercises declined at the university.⁷

His successors were assigned duties similar to those indicated by Kinnersley's activities and academic title. Jacob Duche, an Episcopalian minister admired by Bishop William White for his eloquence and effectiveness in reading the liturgy of that church, became professor of oratory from 1759 to 1778.⁸

It must be remembered that Philadelphia was a center for the growth of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States. Citing the strength and position of Unitarians in early nineteenth century New England in fields related both to religion and education, Hochmuth and Murphy suggest that the resultant emphasis upon a "literary sermon" sped the acceptance of the belles lettres approach to rhetoric. They observe:

Students had always been required to write as a basis for oratorical training. One must remember that a year before John Quincy Adams became Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory at Harvard, a

⁷Elaine Pagel Paden, "The Theory and Practice of Disputation at Princeton, Columbia, and the University of Pennsylvania from 1750 to 1800" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, State University of Iowa, 1943), pp. 35-36.

⁸Frazer, loc. cit. Duche was followed by Archibald Gamble and William Rogers. Each of these was designated "professor of oratory and English literature." Gamble served in that capacity from 1782 until his death in 1788. Rogers began teaching in 1789 and retired in 1811.

Unitarian, Henry Ware, had been elected Hollis Professor of Divinity, and New England churches began to fill their pulpits with "liberal" ministers Unitarians shifted the emphasis in sermonizing away from the rigidly logical sermon for which disputations had been excellent training, to the "literary sermon."⁹

Episcopalian ministers were prominent in the establishment of higher education in Philadelphia. Their sermonizing was different from that of New England Puritans. Their appreciation for English learning did not diminish with the growth of American nationalism. Therefore it is not surprising that among those leaders in the Episcopal church who were instrumental in the development of educational institutions in Philadelphia--particularly the University of Pennsylvania--were strong advocates of the belles lettres approach in the study of rhetoric, the emphasis predominant in England during the last half of the eighteenth century. James Abercrombie was, of course, one of these leaders, but two prominent Episcopalian clergymen in addition to him should be mentioned--the Reverend Doctor William White, first Bishop of the Diocese of Pennsylvania of the Protestant Episcopal Church and the Reverend Doctor John Andrews, Provost of the University of Pennsylvania from 1810 until 1813.

⁹Marie Hochmuth and Richard Murphy, "Rhetorical and Elocutionary Training in Nineteenth-Century Colleges," Wallace, op. cit., p. 157.

William White, 1748-1836, was born in Philadelphia, and like Abercrombie, was a life-time resident of the city. He entered the English department of the college and academy of Philadelphia in 1755, and the Latin-school in 1758. He graduated from the university in 1765, received ordination as deacon in 1770, as priest in 1772, and became a bishop in 1787. Like all members of the clergy of the Episcopal church in the colonies, White faced the necessity of deciding whether to support the independence movement or to remain loyal to England, continuing in the traditions of his church. He supported the colonists, and campaigned vigorously for the organization of a separate Episcopal body in the United States which would retain spiritual connection to the Anglican communion.¹⁰

While Abercrombie was co-editor of the Quarterly Theological Magazine, White published in the journal three essays entitled, "A Commentary on the Duties of the Public Ministry." The essays were directed to young ministers beginning studies preparatory to entering a religious vocation. The bishop's discussion of preaching and reading the liturgy included in these essays indicated an awareness of the belles lettres approach to the study of oral

¹⁰ Appleton's Cyclopaedia of American Biography, ed. James Grant Wilson and John Fiske (New York: D. Appleton and Company: 1889), VI, 476.

presentation.¹¹

A second Episcopal clergyman more directly instrumental than Bishop White in shaping the educational institutions of Philadelphia was John Andrews, 1746-1813. Andrews was born in Maryland, gained his education at the Philadelphia college, and received ordination in February 1767. In 1785 he became principal of the Philadelphia Episcopal academy, beginning twenty-eight years of teaching in the city. He was professor of moral philosophy in the University of Pennsylvania, vice-provost, and finally provost of the university.¹²

White, Andrews and Abercrombie were alike educated in Philadelphia. Their interest and participation in the educational institutions in the city began in 1755 when Bishop White entered the English school of Philadelphia college, and extended through 1817 when Abercrombie resigned as headmaster of the Philadelphia Academy. An examination of the writings of these three clergymen reveals that each had an interest in the study of rhetoric as oral and written communication, and that the belles lettres tradition,

¹¹William White, "A Commentary on the Duties of the Public Ministry," The Quarterly Theological Magazine and Religious Repository, III (1814), 105 ff. The essays were included in the published works of the bishop which appeared in 1833.

¹²Wilson and Fiske, op. cit., I, 75.

distinct from the classical approach, shaped their philosophies of rhetoric.

What Hochmuth and Murphy suggest about the influence of New England Unitarian clergymen upon early nineteenth century education occurred in Philadelphia with much the same result through the activities of the Episcopalian clergy. The acceptance of the belles lettres approach was dependent perhaps upon the intellectual emphases in the sermonizing of the period, but more directly than this, upon the writings of the Episcopalian ministers who accepted the written and oral functions of language as basic to a study of rhetoric. The similarity of their educational and professional backgrounds, as well as their common acceptance of the belles lettres tradition suggest an interdependence among Abercrombie, White and Andrews. An examination of the writings of his Philadelphia contemporaries, then, reveals the theoretical and educational environment which resulted in Abercrombie's contribution as well.

The three essays in Bishop White's "Commentary" are titled "Of Preaching," "Of Officiating in the Ordinary Service of the Church," and "Of Administering in the Offices." The first essay and the part of the second which is devoted to reading the liturgy stemmed from White's personal analysis of the essential character of public speaking and reading as well as his understanding of the general principles of rhetoric which was based upon a study of

various writings upon this subject. The specialized nature of his observations made it necessary for him to cast the principles of speaking and reading in language designed to impress the young minister with the singular nature of his task. Essentially his advice is: practice moderation, avoid extremes, and cultivate natural gifts.

White maintains that preaching involves instruction and persuasion. Instruction includes that which informs and convinces. He recognizes that invention in the preparation of sermons is less a matter of discovering new ideas than re-casting familiar concepts. He observes, "On religious subjects it is difficult to find out, for persons habitually attendant in the house of God, either general arguments or appropriate remarks, which shall be entirely new to them."¹³ The minister's own ingenuity should be engaged instead in achieving "perspicuity of his statements; . . . pertinency of his arguments; and in the placing of ordinary truths in such points of view, as are the best calculated to open the minds of a congregation to the interest which they have in them." The audience, White notes, differs from a general gathering which might be encountered upon other occasions, in that their attendance indicates a predisposition to ". . . be instructed or confirmed in some truth, in some

¹³White, op. cit., pp. 105-106.

duty of religion."¹⁴ The address, therefore, should be directed to the understanding of the audience. The appeal to the hearers should be rational and direct. If the hearers become aware of the speaker's intention in a pathetic appeal, they will resist the speaker's argument. However, White adds, "It is otherwise, when the eloquence seems that of the argument; and not of the person, through whose mouth it comes."¹⁵

Persuasion in White's understanding of the speaker's task encompasses ". . . whatever comes under the head of motive." Appeals to motive [persuasion] cannot be separated catagorically from appeals to understanding [conviction]. He observes that the two may be present "within a single phrase or sentence." In his understanding of the nature of the sermon the blending of persuasion and conviction evolves naturally. He observes that persuasion is most effective ". . . when it is not in the persuasive form; but [when] a truth is brought before the mind, and seen in those of its relations, which clothe it with a persuasion of its own."¹⁶

White offers "some general directions" to the young minister in

¹⁴Ibid., p. 106.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 111.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 111-112.

the preparation of sermons. First, he advises him ". . . always to choose a subject obviously and eminently interesting. . . ." both to himself and his audience.¹⁷ Arguments chosen by the speaker must not only be sound in his opinion, but also in the opinions of his hearers. Of particular importance is the speaker's judging his own discourses as to their effectiveness ". . . not in proportion to their becoming objects of praise, but in proportion to their appearing to have made impressions upon the minds of the people."¹⁸ White indicates that the speaker would be an imperfect judge of the effectiveness of his discourse, but suggests that he sensitively evaluate the clues which he observes: ". . . sometimes the carriage, and sometimes the countenance, may show that the good seed has taken at least a temporary possession of the soil."¹⁹

At no time does White lose an awareness of the specialized nature of the religious address. Invention for the preacher, he feels, derives from the topics supplied by the Christian faith. He observes, "Christianity has been emphatically called a religion of motives." In keeping with this view, White insists upon the importance of soundness of argument, cogency of statement, and awareness of the

¹⁷Ibid., p. 114.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 115-116.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 116.

preacher's dependence upon truth as the convincing agent in speaking. He notes the importance of the speaker's ethical appeal: ". . .there may be perceived in human nature, the ground of a considerable connexion between personal character and persuasive influence."²⁰

From the discussion of content and approach to the preacher's task, White turns to a consideration of the manner of expression. He suggests attention to "literary attainment. . . grammar, including correct writing in every particular, and whatever comes under the name of eloquence." He continues, "In regard to eloquence, with all the rules which it prescribes, to please and to persuade; so far as it is a branch of literature, the study of it involves the study of human nature; and therefore must, in various points of view, be worthy of a Christian minister."²¹ Thus, White affirms his affinity for the belles lettres view that the laws of rhetoric stem from human nature--from an empirical analysis which related man's language behavior to a study of his nature.²²

Attention to eloquence involves within a broader discussion

²⁰Ibid., p. 118.

²¹Ibid., p. 123.

²²C. Vincent M. Belilacqua, "Rhetoric and Human Nature in Kame's Elements of Criticism," Quarterly Journal of Speech, XLVIII (February, 1962), 46. Belilacqua explored this concept he found in the writings of Kames, Blair, Campbell, Samuel Johnson, and others.

specific mention of elocution. In an editor's note, Abercrombie explains White's usage. "The two terms eloquence and elocution, are variously distinguished by different authors. The latter term, as here used, is confined to diction, and attendant action."²³ White warned his readers to avoid the tendency to affectation either in diction or in action ". . .leaving behind, on entry into the pulpit all thought of the preparatory discipline. . . ." ²⁴

Of the three types of delivery suggested by White as appropriate for use by the minister, extemporary, memory, or from writing, the third of these he finds best suited to the minister's task. Use of manuscript delivery, White observes, demands considerable preparation: ". . .before a clergyman brings a sermon with him into the pulpit he ought, . . .to have read over and over, what is to be laid before his audience, and to have meditated on it, so as to have his mind possessed of the contents, independently on their being written. When he is thus furnished, his manner will show that he is aware of there being an audience before him, as well as a book under his eye."²⁵ He summarizes his views, as follows:

²³White, op. cit., p. 127n.

²⁴Ibid., p. 128.

²⁵Ibid., p. 130.

The amount of the whole is this: Let the preacher be well informed, on sacred subjects generally: Let him revolve over and over, those which he intends to bring with him into the pulpit: Let him form the plan of his sermon in his mind, before he ventures to commit it to paper: And then, instead of torturing his invention for novel conceits, and putting his imagination on the stretch for flights of eloquence, let him commit his ideas to paper in a natural order, and in such language as the most easily presents itself; liable however to a review, in order to lop off superfluities, and to conform his periods to his own habits of delivery.²⁶

The bishop remains conservative in his treatment of style:

" . . . no man should make style a matter of consideration, any further than for the prevention of fault. . . [let him] retain his natural manner of expressing himself. "

His discussion of reading prayers at public worship reflects White's awareness of the studies which explore the importance of pronunciation, emphasis, modulation and rate. His principal advice is directed to " . . . keeping of ambition within the bounds of natural qualification. . . . " For those seeking a standard of pronunciation, he recommends current accepted usage. "This is not meant," he continues, "to discourage the minister's study of language, as a branch of science; and particularly the structure of his verbal language. But whatever may be his opinions in his study, let him, in practice, take his tone from society: that is, from the

²⁶ Ibid., p. 133.

more cultivated part of it."²⁷

White feels that emphasis should be dictated by good sense-- "which will insure propriety in this particular." Modulation, by which he means the variation of tone with the manner of delivery, must be regulated by the sense of what is read. White points to a common mistake made by inexperienced readers: "To this may be imputed an unhappy mistake made by some readers, in attempting a variety of modulation to which their powers are incompetent. Their imaginations describe to them degrees of excellence, which they are desirous of attaining to: but in attempting this, they pass from the solemn to the familiar, and in other instances, from one tone to another, in so abrupt a manner as gives a grotesque appearance to the performance." Rate, as well, must be determined by the meaning inherent in the selection being read, by the characteristics of the reader, and by the ability and interests of the hearers. In this last particular, White observes, "The difficulty [of determining the proper rate] is the greater, if it be, as is here suspected, that hearers are differently constituted, in regard to what gives them pleasure or pain in this particular." His final advice in this discussion of reading the liturgy is: ". . .the proper medium is

²⁷Ibid., pp. 345-346.

to be obtained as far as possible."²⁸

The principles of belles lettres from which White's rhetorical theory derived may be summarized, then, as follows:

1. Language behavior in both its written and oral expressions related to human nature.
2. The study of language as a branch of science, "the structure of his [man's] verbal language," was basic both to style and delivery.
3. Deriving from the function and structure of language, components of oral communication included, then, pronunciation, emphasis, modulation, and rate.
4. Style and delivery were determined by the speaker's natural gifts and the nature of his hearers.
5. Verbal behavior, then, should be appropriate, pertinent, and perspicuous.

White does not name any particular theorists upon whose works he based his presentation. He acknowledges that a considerable body of writings, particularly on delivery, was available for examination. His indebtedness to Beattie, Lord Kames, and Blair for the philosophical basis of his discussion is apparent.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 347-349.

The second Episcopalian clergyman influential in the establishment of higher education in Philadelphia was John Andrews. He became associated with the College of Philadelphia as Professor of Moral Philosophy in 1789, before that institution merged into the University of Pennsylvania, and remained after the merger in the capacities of vice-provost and finally provost of the university.²⁹ Andrews taught courses in logic and rhetoric. He published in 1801 his Compendium of Logic and in 1813 his Elements of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres.³⁰ In the preface to the second of these Andrews indicates that the material in the work had been compiled ". . . about twenty years ago. . . ." ³¹ This would place its date of composition during the last decade of the eighteenth century. In its initial form Andrews used the textbook as a study guide to be transcribed by his students in class. Its form was question and answer--the arrangement he retains in the published version of the textbook. Admittedly a compilation, no claim for originality was made for the work, except in the selection and arrangement of the materials. He cites the writings of Beattie, Blair, Irvine, and Lord Kames, particularly

²⁹Frazer, op. cit., p. v.

³⁰John Andrews, Elements of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres (Philadelphia: Moses Thomas, 1813).

³¹Ibid., p. vii.

acknowledging his dependence upon the first two.

In his presentation, rhetoric encompasses both written and oral language with emphasis upon the written forms of expression.

The four chief divisions of the work are as follows:

1. Elements of style
2. Of the different kinds of style
3. Of the different kinds of prose composition
4. Of poetry.³²

In the third of these divisions in chapter seven Andrews discusses

³²The table of contents suggests the approach and development of the subject. It is, as follows:

Part I Elements of style

Chapter I Of Perspicuity

- Section 1 Of perspicuity as it arises from a right choice of words and phrases
- 2 Of perspicuity as it arises from a right arrangement of words and phrases in the construction of sentences.

Chapter 2 Of Ornament

- Section 1 Of Tropes
- 2 Of Figures
- 3 Of the application and use of tropes and figures

Part II Of the different kinds of style

Chapter 1 Of the concise and the diffuse style

- 2 Of the nervous and the feeble style
- 3 Of the vehement style
- 4 Of the dry style
- 5 Of the plain style
- 6 Of the neat style
- 7 Of the elegant style
- 8 Of the florid style
- 9 Of the simple and the affected style
- 10 Of the sublime style
- 11 Of the method of attaining a good style

the oration as a type of prose composition, and in addition, offers some observations on the "pronunciation or delivery of an oration."³³

The author depends largely upon Blair's Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres in these discussions. Essentially, he reorganizes Blair's discussion and casts it into his question-answer form.

The first topic which Andrews includes under the heading,

- Part III Of the different kinds of prose composition
 - Chapter 1 Of historical writing
 - 2 Of philosophical writing
 - 3 Of dialogue writing
 - 4 Of epistolary writing
 - 5 Of fictitious history
 - 6 Of the popular essay
 - 7 Of orations
 - Of the pronunciation or delivery of an oration
- Part IV Of Poetry
 - Chapter 1 Of the general nature of poetry
 - Section 1 Of the end of poetry
 - 2 Of poetic fiction
 - 3 Of poetical arrangement
 - 4 Of the language of poetry
 - 5 Of versification
 - Chapter 2 Of the genera and species of poetry
- Appendix I Of words and phrases inconsistent with purity and propriety
 - Chapter 1 Of grammatical errors and foreign idioms inconsistent with purity
 - 2 Of words and phrases inconsistent with purity
 - II A Critical examination of the style of Mr. Addison in no. 411 of the Spectator
 - III Of some figures not noticed in the preceding compendium and of some fine turns and repetitions of sounds

³³Ibid. The discussion of orations includes pages 191 through 213. The discussion of delivery begins on page 214 and ends on page 231. This represents approximately one-eighth of the book.

"Of Orations," is the parts of an oration. In answer to the questions posed he relies completely upon Blair.

Question: What are the parts of an oration?

Answer: . . . This being the natural train of speaking, the parts that compose a regular formal Oration, are these six: first, the Exordium or Introduction; secondly, the State, and the Division of the Subject; thirdly, Narration or Explication; fourthly, the Reasoning or Arguments; fifthly, the Pathetic Part; and lastly, the Conclusion.

Question: Is it necessary that each of these parts should enter into every public discourse?

Answer: I do not mean that each of these must always enter into every public discourse. . . .³⁴

Adapting the principles of Blair, Andrews discusses each of the divisions of an oration and cites rules for correctly forming each. In his discussion, for example, of the exordium, or introduction, Andrews expresses his acceptance of the ground of rhetoric in nature:

Question: What have you to observe with respect to this part of an oration?

Answer: It is not a rhetorical invention; but founded upon nature, and suggested by common sense.³⁵

After introducing this part of the oration, he suggests several rules which should be observed "for the proper composition of this part of a discourse." The introduction, Andrews advises, should be easy

³⁴ Ibid., p. 191. Cf. Hugh Blair, Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres (8th ed.; New York: Collins and Co., 1819), p. 341.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 193.

and natural--always suggested by the subject under consideration. Correctness should be carefully studied in the introduction since the hearers are more disposed to criticize during the first of the speech. It must be characterized by modesty, avoiding ostentation and display. The delivery of an introduction ordinarily will be calm and unexcited. This part of the speech should not anticipate any material part of the subject. And, finally, as the sixth rule Andrews suggests:

The introduction ought to be proportioned, both in length and in kind, to the discourse that is to follow; in length, as nothing can be more absurd than to erect a very great portico before a small building; and in kind, as it would be absurd to overcharge, with superb ornament, the portico of a plain dwelling house, or to make the entrance of a monument as gay as that to an harbour.³⁷

References to the succeeding parts of an oration discussed by Andrews follow the same general pattern: first, an introductory explanation is presented, and then rules for the composition are discussed.

Andrews makes clear his acceptance of Blair's view that the science of composition is based upon an understanding of human nature--how man responds and thinks--both in the expression and reception of ideas. In discussing the division of the subject, for example, Andrews states, "In division, we must take care to follow

³⁷Ibid., p. 197.

the order of nature; beginning with the simplest points, such as are most easily apprehended, and necessary to be before discussed; and proceeding thence to those which are built upon the former, and suppose them to be known."³⁸

In his discussion of the argument or reasoning, Andrews cites the importance of proper invention, then examines the process of arrangement of argument. He observes that arguments should not be "blended confusedly together," since arguments are directed to establish one of these three things: "that something is true; that it is morally right or fit; or that it is profitable and good." Since arguments designed to establish each of these are selected to appeal to different principles in human nature, they must be kept separate and distinct.³⁹ Andrews admits the validity of pathetic appeals, requiring, however, that understanding first be acquired through logical means.

All that can be said in general is, that if we expect any emotion which we raise to have a lasting effect, we must be careful to bring over to our side, in the first place the understanding and the judgement. The hearers must be convinced that there are good and sufficient grounds for their entering with warmth into the passion which they feel; and remain satisfied that they are not carried away by mere delusion. . . [or] as soon as he ceases to speak, they will resume their ordinary tone of thought. . . .⁴⁰

³⁸Ibid., p. 199.

³⁹Ibid., pp. 203-204.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 207.

Continuing his analysis of the psychology of the audience, Andrews warns his readers against a "refrigerant to passion"--advising the hearers of the intention to appeal to their emotions. He urges the development of a "natural warmth" as most effective in an appeal to the emotional responsiveness in an audience. This warmth occurs only when the speaker first feels the emotion himself. The reader is further admonished to employ the proper language of the passions: "We should observe in what manner any one expresses himself who is under the power of a real and strong passion; and we shall always find his language unaffected and simple." While art may be introduced to appeal to the imagination, an appeal to the emotions can be successful when it "seems to be the work of nature only." Finally, in discussing the conclusion to a speech, Andrews observes, "For, the great rule of a conclusion, and what nature obviously suggests, is, to place that last on which we choose that the strength of our cause should rest."⁴¹

The analysis of delivery continues the methodical approach established in the discussion of the composition of orations. The public speaker, Andrews notes, ". . . must speak so as to be fully and easily understood by all who hear him; and next, to speak with grace and force, so as to please and to move his audience."⁴²

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 208-213.

⁴²Ibid., p. 214.

In order to accomplish the first of these, it is necessary that the speaker maintain a due degree of loudness of voice, distinctness, slowness, and propriety of pronunciation. Concerning correct pronunciation, Andrews affirms that oral usage is the essential standard. He states, "Instructions concerning this article can be given by the living voice only."⁴³ His analysis of language indicates that accent is the most important element in pronunciation which the speaker should consider. "How, having once learned the proper seats of. . . accents, it is an important rule, to give every word just the same accent in public speaking, as in common discourse."⁴⁴

Continuing, Andrews discusses the attainment of grace and force in delivery. In order to speak with grace and force, he observes that ". . . four things are necessary: a due regard to emphasis, pauses, tones and gestures." He advises the student to study the examples of natural conversation, then to apply these to public speaking. The discussion of these elements of delivery shows dependence upon Blair, and adds little which might be considered original with Andrews. He concludes his consideration of delivery with an observation adapted from his source:

⁴³Ibid., p. 216.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 218.

Question: Have you any thing further to add upon this subject?

Answer: To attain any extremely correct, and perfectly graceful delivery, is what few can expect, so many natural talents being requisite to concur in forming it. But to attain, what as to the effect is very little inferior, a forcible and persuasive manner, is within the power of most persons; if they will allow themselves to follow nature, and will speak in public, as they do in private, when they speak in earnest, and from the heart.⁴⁵

Thus, in Andrew's conception of rhetoric only that area of composition which existed first in an oral form demands a separate analysis of the manner of its delivery. Throughout the work Andrews acknowledges the belles lettres emphasis upon language as oral and written expression. He accepts, with Bishop White, the view that the composition, delivery and response to public speaking are grounded in human nature--the study of language being pursued as a factor of human behavior, considered logically and experientially.

In conclusion it may be observed that the writings of White and Andrews reflect the approach to rhetoric which maintained in the educational institutions of Philadelphia from the establishment of higher education in the city. Their studies derived from the writings of British rhetorical theorists, principally Beattie, Blair

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 231. Cf. Blair, op. cit., pp. 402-403.

and Lord Kames. Each understood that language consisted of oral and written communication. They demonstrated an awareness of the importance of studying to gain proficiency in communicative skills. Their writings issued from the educational and theoretical environment in which Abercrombie taught and prepared his two works on public speaking and reading. The three contributed to the establishment of the belles lettres approach to studying oral expression. Abercrombie's writings, more complete, more general in presentation, and more directly oriented to the teaching of speech than those of White and Andrews, necessitate thorough consideration as they reflect not only the belles lettres emphasis upon the nature of language as oral expression, but also the practical implementation of theory in the dominant forms of communication: reading and public speaking.

CHAPTER IV

ABERCROMBIE'S SPEECH THEORY:

DEFINITION AND RELATION

When in 1803 James Abercrombie published his Two Compends for the Use of the Philadelphia Academy I. Of Elocution. II. Of Natural History, he provided the first secondary school textbook in speech written by an American. His "Lectures on the Arts of Reading and Public Speaking," which were published in the Port Folio, constituted a second early and significant treatment of speech and was possibly the first serialized presentation of this subject published in America.

In the preceding chapters the educational and theoretical contexts of Abercrombie's writings have been examined. In this and in succeeding chapters Abercrombie's speech theory itself will be the subject of investigation. The purpose of this chapter is to gain an understanding of the definitions which Abercrombie offered for the subjects which he considered--reading and public speaking--and to present an over-view of his speech theory.

Preliminary to the actual examination of Abercrombie's works, however, some observations about his sources and the extent of his dependence upon the writings of other rhetoricians should be made. The inexact crediting of sources common among eighteenth and early nineteenth century writers and publishers must be acknowledged.¹ Abercrombie either casually noted his sources or omitted specific references to them. In the preface to his Compend,² for example, he inexplicitly credits "Blair, Beattie, Walker, &c." as "the high authorities from whom I have selected a considerable portion of the work. . . ."³ A comparison of Abercrombie's Compend with the writings of the authors he cited and with other similar works reveals his dependence upon the three writers he generally credited as well as many whose names do not appear in the Compend: Thomas Sheridan, Lindley Murray, John Ward, and William Enfield. In the "Lectures on the Arts of Reading and Public Speaking," however,

¹ Parrish observes that sentiment in America gave colonial printers and authors license to print or reprint with or without proper credit works which originated in England. W. M. Parrish, "The Burglarizing of Burgh or the Case of the Purloined Passions," Quarterly Journal of Speech, XXXVIII (December, 1952), 431-434.

² Hereinafter Abercrombie's Two Compends for the Use of the Philadelphia Academy I. Of Elocution. II. Of Natural History will be referred to as the Compend.

³ Compend, p. vi.

Abercrombie consistently notes his sources, and frequently quotes directly from "the celebrated Dr. Blair" or "the ingenious and elaborate Mr. Walker." He sometimes follows the disturbing practice, however, of deferring credit to the end of a lecture. Concluding his lecture on emphasis, for example, he observes, "The most elaborate and judicious discussion of this branch of our general subject is that contained in Walker's Elements of Elocution, to which, as well as to other standard authors on the art of reading, I refer you, for ampler and more minute information."⁴ An examination of the lecture reveals that Abercrombie does, in fact, depend extensively upon Walker's discussion of emphasis, but that he selects examples from Enfield and Murray, and supplements Walker's material with similar discussions by Sheridan and Beattie. In the course of his lectures Abercrombie mentions every source which he employs with the exception of James Burgh. The frequent reprinting of Burgh's introductory essay to The Art of Speaking, however, suggests that Abercrombie may have credited Sheridan or Walker with Burgh's contribution.⁵ Abercrombie directly quotes

⁴Port Folio, II (1809), 9.

⁵Parrish, (op. cit., p. 434), presents evidence supporting his view that a spurious Rhetorical Grammar attributed to Thomas Sheridan was published in Philadelphia under the supervision of Archibald Gamble in 1783. The work included Burgh's essay on elocution.

many of his sources, occasionally paraphrases a discussion, changing only a word here or there by substituting a synonym or by omitting a phrase, and frequently synthesizes several presentations into a discussion similar but not exactly like any of his sources. While Abercrombie does not in every case specifically cite his sources, he provides general acknowledgements which assist in locating the works from which his theories were derived. Throughout the discussion of Abercrombie's lectures and the Compend, then, the works upon which he based his presentation will be cited and the extent of his dependence upon these sources will be indicated.

In the Compend Abercrombie first suggests the sequence of studies in which a consideration of oral reading and public speaking belongs. He observes, "Young Gentlemen, Having finished our observations upon Style, or the construction of language, we proceed now, from considering the matter to treat of the manner in which composition is to be communicated, or delivered agreeably to the established laws of elocution."⁶ As has already been discussed, Abercrombie's understanding of the province of rhetoric is related to his general philosophy of education. If rhetoric is understood as the rationale of all informative and suasory discourse,⁷

⁶Compend, p. 1.

⁷Donald C. Bryant, "Rhetoric, Its Function and Scope," Quarterly Journal of Speech, XXXIV (December, 1953), 404.

Abercrombie met the requirements imposed by this definition in his educational philosophy implemented in the Philadelphia Academy. In no single course, however, did Abercrombie present, in the manner of John Quincy Adams or John Witherspoon, a complete system of rhetoric based upon the five classical canons--invention, arrangement, style, delivery, and memory. Instead, he seems to have taught these areas within several courses of his program of study.

From an examination of the textbook A Compend of Logic by John Andrews which Abercrombie used for his course in logic in the Philadelphia Academy, it may be surmised that he dealt particularly with invention in that course. In the study of style which he defined as "the construction of language" and "the matter. . . of composition," Abercrombie evidently considered elocutio and dispositio--the canons style and arrangement. Finally, Abercrombie narrowed the general communicative process to delivery which he presented under various titles, including rhetoric, elocution, eloquence, and pronunciation. He omitted specific treatment of the final canon, memory.

In his Compend Abercrombie defines elocution as follows:

"Elocution in the modern sense of the word, signifies the proper pronunciation of words and sentences, when they are so arranged as to constitute discourse."⁸ This definition, he continues, involves

⁸Compend, p. 2.

" . . . two general divisions of the subject; viz. the art of reading and the art of public speaking. " In order to gain an understanding of the subjects which Abercrombie treats in the Compend, the following tabular view of the work may be examined:

Tabular View of the Compend on Elocution

I. Introduction and Definition	pages	1 - 2
II. Of the Art of Reading		
A. Definition		2 - 3
B. On the Voice		
1. Three pitches: high, middle, low		3 - 4
2. Audibility		4 - 5
3. Distinctness of Articulation		6 - 7
4. Rate		7 - 8
5. Tone		8 - 9
6. Quantity		10 - 14
a. Highness or lowness		10 - 12
b. Swiftmess or slowness		12 - 14
7. Quality		14 - 20
a. Strength or weakness		14 - 17
b. Clearness or obscureness		17 - 18
c. Fullness or smallness		18 - 19
d. Smoothness or roughness		19 - 20

C. Use of the Voice in Reading	20 - 59
1. Accent	22 - 31
a. Principal	
b. Secondary	
2. Emphasis	32 - 34
3. Modulation	35 - 40
a. Rising inflection	
b. Falling inflection	
4. Expression	41 - 48
5. Pauses	48 - 59
D. General Rules of Elocution	60 - 64
E. Selections for Practice with Notes on Delivery	
1. <u>An Eastern Story</u> , by Samuel Johnson (Prose)	64 - 78
2. Collin's <u>Ode on the Passions</u> (Poetry)	78 - 91
III. Of the Art of Speaking	91 - 113
Definitions and Principles	91
1. Tones	92 - 96
2. Looks	97 - 102
3. Gestures	102 - 109
IV. Conclusion	110 - 113

While the broad categories reading and public speaking served as the basis for dividing Abercrombie's textbook into two sections, the subjects are not treated as separate processes. Behind his presentation of the principles of voice and bodily action which are adaptable to both subjects is an awareness of the common goal of both--the communication of ideas. The division inherent in his treatment of the subjects considered under the broader topics reading and public speaking is more basic than that implied by a casual examination of the definition of elocution which Abercrombie offers in the Compend. He considers the speaker-reader's role as that which the listener perceives--what he hears and what he sees--the voice and bodily activity. This is the basis for division followed both in the Compend and in the lectures. The principles of either area which Abercrombie presents under the general heading reading pertained as readily to public speaking. This accounts for a seeming imbalance in his approach--that ninety of the one hundred thirteen pages of the Compend are devoted to reading and only twenty-two pages to public speaking. The writer offers considerations common to both areas under the first heading.

In contrast to the Compend in which he immediately sets out to present to the students of the Philadelphia Academy the principles of reading and public speaking, Abercrombie introduces his "Lectures

on the Arts of Reading and Public Speaking"⁵ with a lengthy discussion of the plan of the series of addresses. He indicates first the scope of his subject and the distinctive contribution which he claims for the lectures, second, the goals which his hearer's could expect to attain, third, the method of study to be employed, and fourth, the areas of discussion which he would present. Abercrombie intended this preview of the lectures to acquaint those committed to a study of reading and public speaking with the subject matter to be examined and to attract any uncommitted members of his audience to participate in the series.

The general topic which Joseph Dennie chose for Abercrombie's lectures was "Rhetoric--for the Port Folio." It is not surprising that Dennie should give so much space in his journal to a publication of the lectures. He was devoted to Abercrombie and appreciated his learning and his educational activities. Beyond this personal regard for Abercrombie, the nature of the journal suggested the inclusion of the lectures. In the prospectus which Dennie presented at the beginning of the new series of volumes in 1806, he describes an important department of the Port Folio, the Miscellany, as follows:

In this variegated department we shall give a decided preference, and a conspicuous place to Original papers upon topics of Classical Literature, Taste, Rhetoric

⁵Abercrombie's "Lectures on the Arts of Reading and Public Speaking" were published in the Port Folio during 1809 and 1810. Hereinafter they will be referred to as the lectures.

Criticism, Wit and Humour. Indeed, it is our wish to traverse the whole province of the Belles Lettres, and to address every polite reader in the language of Pope:

Together let us range this ample field,
Try what the open, what the covert yield.⁶

Dennie's reference to rhetoric as a part of the "whole province of the Belles Lettres" suggests that he understood that rhetoric included language behavior--particularly the delivery of language through voice and bodily action. Dennie reveals an appreciation for the writings of British rhetorical theorists in references to their works which he included in the introduction to Abercrombie's lectures. Dennie knew as well the writings of his American contemporaries. Since John Quincy Adams was a contributor to the Port Folio,⁷ Dennie would certainly have followed his academic and literary accomplishments with interest. According to the list of subscribers which precedes the title page of John Witherspoon's The Miscellaneous Works,⁸ Dennie purchased the 1803 edition, which included

⁶Port Folio, I (New Series), 1806, Prospectus.

⁷Frank Luther Mott, A History of American Magazines 1741-1850 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), p. 226. Mott observes: "The first number (of the Port Folio) was written chiefly by two men. No names were signed to Port Folio contributions; but it is known that the author of the Journal of a Tour Through Silesia, which began in this number and ran through most of the first year (1801) was John Quincy Adams, who was likewise the translator of the Satire of Juvenal. . . ." Dennie contributed the remaining original articles included in the first number.

⁸John Witherspoon, The Miscellaneous Works (Subscription ed.; Philadelphia: William W. Woodward, 1803).

Witherspoon's Lectures on Eloquence. From an awareness of the writings of British and American rhetorical theorists and from his own observations, Dennie writes editorially of the importance of "rhetoric in our rising Republic," suggesting that whatever contributes ". . . after the manner of Quintilian and Cicero to the formation of an accomplished orator, deserved, not only in a liberal, but even in a mercenary view, the attention of every aspirant to fame and fortune."⁹

The editor assures his readers that, although much of the matter of which the lectures are composed is original, a considerable portion had been selected from the most popular authors on the subject of elocution, particularly Aristotle, Quintilian, Cicero, Rollin,¹⁰ Campbell,¹¹ and Enfield.¹² Dennie justifies Abercrombie's use of the works of these authors, suggesting that ". . . after the multiplied labours both of the sequestered student and the powerful orator, it would argue either presumption, or impertinence in any

⁹Port Folio, I (1806), 102.

¹⁰Charles Rollin (1661-1741), The Method of Teaching and Studying the Belles Lettres, or An Introduction to Language, Poetry, Rhetoric, Moral Philosophy, etc. (translated from the French; London: 1769).

¹¹George Campbell (1749-1796), The Philosophy of Rhetoric (1776).

¹²William Enfield (1741-1797), The Speaker, or Miscellaneous Pieces Selected from the Best English Writers (London: 1774).

author, who arrogantly professed to exhibit a system entirely new."¹³

Beginning his lectures, Abercrombie states the purpose of the series as follows:

Improvement in the important arts of Reading and of Public Speaking, being the object of the Lectures I propose to deliver to you, I shall, in the course of them, endeavour to explain the great principles upon which those arts are founded; by the knowledge and strict observance of which principles alone, correctness of enunciation, gracefulness of delivery, and that impressive communication of thought which arrests the attention and captivates the heart, are to be obtained.¹⁴

Thus, Abercrombie intended to accomplish practical goals. The means which the lecturer proposes are as well founded upon practical considerations. Abercrombie notes that many learned, elaborate and judicious treatments of the theory and practice of rhetoric have been written by famous orators and scholars. He cautions, however, ". . . theory alone, though flowing from the animated pen of a Cicero, a Quintilian, a Sheridan, a Walker,¹⁵ a Massillon,¹⁶ or a Burke,¹⁷

¹³Port Folio, I (1806), 103.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵John Walker (1732-1807), Elements of Elocution (1781) and A Rhetorical Grammar (1785).

¹⁶Jean Baptist Massillon (1663-1742), French preacher and bishop, Charge (with an essay on the art of preaching.).

¹⁷Edmund Burke (1729-1797), British statesman and orator, A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas and of the Sublime and the Beautiful (1756). The second edition (1757) included a "Discourse concerning Reason."

and enforced by the most luminous written exemplification,¹⁸ will never form either a correct reader, or a graceful and pleasing orator."¹⁹

Abercrombie maintains that effectual instruction depends upon ". . . information exemplified and enforced by practice." He intended, then, to base his lectures upon practical considerations instead of detailed theoretical discussion. However, he observes that this approach does not altogether preclude attention to theory, saying, "There are, however, some leading and essential principles in both the arts which must be methodically arranged, systematically communicated in written language, and carefully committed to memory in order to form a proper basis for proficiency in oral communication of sentiment, whether by reading or by recitation."²⁰ Abercrombie presents these leading and essential principles as subjects of his lectures, derived from the writings of the "most judicious and popular authors on these subjects." In this connection

¹⁸Abercrombie here referred to the practice then coming into common use among writers of textbooks on reading of describing in complete detail the bodily action and vocal variation which would aid the reader in his communication of the author's meaning. Abercrombie had employed this method of exemplification in the Compend.

¹⁹Port Folio, I (1806), 104.

²⁰Ibid.

he observes that there is ". . . little remaining to be added upon topics which have been so recently and so minutely discussed by a Blair, a Beattie, a Barron, a Campbell and a Home." Abercrombie does not attempt to diversify this instruction by a change of language designed to improve that which others had already conveyed satisfactorily. He indicates, rather, that ". . . the chain of connexion, with some original supplementary observations and elucidation. . ." reflects his contribution to the general stock of Polite Literature.²¹

The topics for each of the lectures with the brief commentary which Abercrombie included in this introductory lecture indicate his selection of subjects, the sequence, and the approach which he expected to follow in discussing them. These are listed, as follows:

Lecture 1. On Articulation, or the construction and proper use of the organs of speech in producing those various sounds, which constitute the human voice.

Lecture 2. On the nature and proper use of Accent.

Lecture 3. On the nature and proper use of Emphasis, by which the truth and force of sentiment is conveyed.

Lecture 4. On the quantity of syllables.

Lecture 5. On pauses, the judicious observance of which gives expression and animation to the subject discussed.

²¹Ibid., p. 105.

Lecture 6. On Tones, or on the nature, modulation, and operation of the human voice, in forming, by its inflexions those many expressions of sentiment and passion, which give energy to language and efficacy to thought.

Lecture 7. On Looks, their proper application to language, and powerful influence when judiciously exerted.

Lecture 8. On Gestures.

Lecture 9. On the construction and proper recitation of the proper species of Verse, the correct application of the poetical pauses, and the means of producing the three great objects of poetic numbers, Melody, Harmony, and Expression.

Lecture 10. On the peculiarities attached to the correct reading and recitation of Narration, Dialogue, Soliloquy, Addresses and Works of Sentiment and Imagination.

Lecture 11. Of the different Figures of Speech, and the peculiar method of justly communicating to each its proper expression both in reading and recitation.

Lecture 12. On the Constituent Parts of a Regular Discourse.²²

The examination of Abercrombie's subjects, approach, and introductory comments suggest an interesting comparison with the writings of John Witherspoon. While Witherspoon's career preceded Abercrombie's there are marked similarities between the two. Both gentlemen were ministers who addressed many of their observations to young men who were anticipating a vocation in the church. Among Witherspoon's writings are two which are significant in the development of rhetorical theory in America.

²²

²² Ibid., p. 315. The title of Lecture 11 is omitted from the introductory lecture. It is included in Port Folio, IV (1810), 21.

In the first, Lectures on Moral Philosophy, Witherspoon outlines the studies necessary for young men entering the ministry, suggesting study in

1. Languages
2. Moral Philosophy
3. History, sacred and profane
4. Eloquence, including the belles lettres study in general.²³

Concerning the final division, Witherspoon observes, "Lastly, Eloquence; that is to say, composition and criticism, including the whole of what is commonly called the belles lettres study. Nothing is more plain than the necessity of this science: public speaking is to be the chief or one of the chief parts of a minister's business of life. . . ."²⁴ Both Abercrombie and Witherspoon demonstrate an appreciation for "the belles lettres study" and each sought to apply its principles to public speaking.

Witherspoon's awareness and appreciation for the belles lettres tradition became focused in his Lectures on Eloquence. Warren Guthrie observes about this work, "Although Witherspoon was

²³ John Witherspoon, Lectures on Moral Philosophy, edited by Varum Lansing Collins (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1912), p. 20.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 22.

educated in Scotland and contemporary Scottish influences are apparent in his writing, the Lectures constitute a genuine American rhetoric. Based primarily on classical rhetoric, Witherspoon interpreted these principles in the light of the philosophy of his own time."²⁵

The presence of many sentiments derived from an awareness of the importance of language behavior in forming a philosophy of composition and delivery underscore the Scottish influences noted by Guthrie, and warrants the conclusion that Witherspoon's theory contains many similarities to the belles lettres tradition given more complete expression later by Abercrombie. This becomes apparent with an examination of Witherspoon's lectures.

In lecture one through three of his series of sixteen, Witherspoon includes some "preliminary observations" relating composition to delivery. He begins with a discussion of the relative importance of natural ability and training. Next, he presents some general rules for all sorts of writing: (1) study and imitate the greatest examples; (2) study composition and exercises in pronunciation; (3) study branches subordinate to the study of eloquence: grammar, orthography, and punctuation; (4) avoid blemishes in writing and speaking; peculiar

²⁵Warren Guthrie, "Rhetorical Theory in Colonial America," History of Speech Education in America, ed. Karl Wallace (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1954), p. 56.

phrases, improper epithets, and unnecessary words; and, finally, (5) follow nature. After concluding these observations, Witherspoon projects in lecture four the method of examining rhetoric which he expected to follow under seven divisions. These are, as follows:

- I To treat of language in general, its qualities, and powers, --eloquent speech--and its history and practice as an art.
- II To consider oratory as divided into its three great kinds, the sublime--simple--and mixed, --their characters--their distinctions--their beauties--and their uses.
- III To consider it as divided into its constituent parts, invention, disposition, stile, pronunciation and gesture.
- IV To consider it as its object is different information, demonstration, persuasion, entertainment.
- V As its subject is different. The pulpit, the bar, and the senate, or any deliberate assembly.
- VI To consider the structure and parts of a particular discourse, their order, connexion, proportion, and ends.
- VII Recapitulation, and an inquiry into the principles of taste, or of beauty and gracefulness, as applicable not only to oratory, but to all the other (commonly called) the fine arts.²⁶

While divisions II, III, and VI are clearly based upon classical theory, a consideration of public speaking structured on the basis of the end desired which forms the fourth division or the nature of the

²⁶ John Witherspoon, Works (Philadelphia: William W. Woodward, 1802), III, 497.

speaking situation which constitutes the fifth division seem dependent upon the rhetorical theories contemporary with the lectures' composition. The preliminary considerations show marked awareness of the belles lettres emphasis upon the importance of language to composition and delivery of speeches, while divisions I and VII which discuss language, "its history and practice as an art," and "an inquiry into the principles of taste, or of beauty and gracefulness, as applicable not only to oratory, but to all the other. . . fine arts," seem to have been drawn directly from belles lettres rhetorical thought. Thus, it may be concluded that Witherspoon drew upon this tradition and his knowledge of classical theory in a presentation of the principles of public speaking, while Abercrombie, basing his work upon the belles lettres tradition, emphasized particularly oral reading, giving less attention to speaking, per se.

An examination of the subjects of his lectures and the topics discussed in the Compend suggest, however, that Abercrombie's presentation does not admit to division into two exclusive categories--reading and public speaking. The division hinges not upon the performance areas, but upon the individual's response in vocal presentation of language and in bodily action.

Abercrombie, continuing the over-view of his subject in the first lecture, defines the specific areas, reading and public speaking, and indicates further the method of study which would characterize

his examination of these areas. First, he defines the art of reading:

By the Art of Reading, I mean the art of correct and articular pronunciation; or, of intelligibly, emphatically, and impressively repeating what is written in any language; or, in other words, the art of reading well, consists in pronouncing the thoughts of others or our own, exhibited in visible characters, as if the same had their full and proper operation on our minds, and were the result of our own immediate conception.²⁷

Two accomplishments are requisite to achieving the level of excellence implied by this definition: first, the reader must fully comprehend the sense or meaning of the selection, and second, he must enter into the spirit of his author. Abercrombie explains the second requirement, as follows: ". . .for he can never convey the force or fullness of the author's ideas to another unless he feels them himself: and the voice will naturally vary, according to the impression made upon the mind, or the passion excited."

The criterion upon which success in reading may be determined is its approximating natural conversation. Abercrombie maintains that during natural conversation ". . .we feel that we express, and instinctively commit the expression of it to nature alone, who if unrestrained, will always give just and forcible expression to sentiment. . . ." He continues, "The art of reading well consists in conveying to the hearer the whole meaning of the writer"--both

²⁷Port Folio, I (1809), 105.

the intellectual and the emotional meaning.

In his introductory lecture Abercrombie does not offer a precise definition for public speaking. It becomes clear that elocution usually means delivery, employed during both reading and speaking. Specifically, elocution connotes vocal and bodily activity employed in the communication of written language by reading/reciting or speaking. The nature of the literary object includes creative writing, both poetry and prose, and writings more directly informative, such as essays and speeches.

That the communicative processes are not the basis for a division of Abercrombie's consideration of speech finds additional support in his introduction of a statement from William Enfield's The Speaker which applies both to speaking and reading. "The fundamental law of Oratory is, 'Follow Nature'--without an attentive regard to which all other rules will only produce stiff and affected declamation--not just elocution."²⁸ An examination of the context of this statement indicates that the reference was to public speaking in The Speaker. The admonition to "Follow nature" supports as well Abercrombie's agreement with the belles lettres understanding, discussed previously, that language behavior stems from man's natural response to his environment and relationships. This notion

²⁸Ibid., p. 203. Cf. Enfield, op. cit., p. ix.

is recurrent in both the Compend and the lectures.

Abercrombie suggests the difficulty of teaching by any means other than example the concept of natural delivery.

For no one can deserve the appellation of a good reader or speaker, much less of an accomplished orator, who does not to a distinct articulation, a ready command of the voice, add just pronunciation, accent and emphasis, and the various expressions of emotion and passion: but in this part of his office, written precepts alone can afford him little assistance.²⁹

Abercrombie feels that any system which substitutes descriptions of the proper emotion, or rules to assist in the selection of vocal variation, bodily action, facial expression or gesture, would be imperfect and impractical. He does not altogether discount the value of rules, but he compares their usefulness in the study of delivery to the artist's study of anatomy.

By studying it the [principles of anatomy] one may learn to know the distribution of the muscles, and the connexion of the bones; but it never can give an adequate idea of the force and beauty of the living form. The study of rules of rhetoric [delivery] is, to the pupil of eloquence, what anatomy is to the young painter. In order to design correctly, he must know the structure of the human body; but, however, perfect he may be in his knowledge, the art of colouring is still wanting; and to give life to the canvass, he must study nature, and those who have excelled in imitating it.³⁰

²⁹Ibid., p. 204.

³⁰Ibid., p. 204.

One additional statement indicates Abercrombie's acceptance of a basic relationship between reading and speaking inherent in their communicative function. He suggests, "Reading may. . .be called Artificial Speaking; as it is indeed the imitation of natural eloquence. Hence, like all other imitative arts, its end is defeated by every appearance of study, habit, or affectation."

Thus, it may be surmised that in Abercrombie's theory, the arts of reading and public speaking share a basic communicative function. In each case natural, sincere expression is the standard for judging effectiveness of the oral performance. The speaker/reader's use of the voice, his articulation, accent, emphasis and expression of emotion, and his use of bodily activity, his facial expression and gestures, are elements of the natural expressive process which could be isolated for study and improvement. These elements of eloquence derive from man's natural response to his need and desire to communicate information and feelings through language. Study of both public speaking and reading center in an analysis of language presentation through voice and action. Thus, the province of oral reading is shared by public speaking since the elements of one relate to those of the other.

What are the areas of study which Abercrombie isolates for consideration by those interested in improving their communicative abilities? First, he lists distinctness of articulation--the

fundamental principle of both the arts of reading and public speaking. Correctness of articulation depends upon ". . . giving to every sound which is uttered its due proportion, and making every word, syllable, and even every letter in the word be heard distinctly. "

Allied to this requirement is a second, proper accent, by which Abercrombie seems to imply a concept similar to our specialized use of a term more general in his time, pronunciation. The lecturer explains that accent is particularly susceptible to change in English, and that the reader and speaker should be sensitive to correct, current usage. A third area of concern to the student is emphasis, marking for particular notice or stress either words or syllables."³¹

When Abercrombie introduces a consideration of tones, or modulations of the human voice which express the various sentiments and passions of the mind, he summarizes the relative importance of the elements of voice, as follows: "Accent affects only letters and syllables; emphasis, only words; but tones affect sentences, paragraphs, and sometimes the whole of a discourse."³² The lecturer maintains that the nature of language as the vehicle of thought carries inherent in its expression both the logical and emotional meanings intended by the speaker or writer. If language is successfully to

³¹ Ibid., p. 205.

³² Ibid., p. 209.

express meaning on both levels, it is necessary that it approach the standard inherent in nature. He observes, "As the communication of these internal [emotional] feelings is of the utmost importance in our social intercourse, the Author of nature did not leave the invention of the language of emotion to man, but impressed it himself upon our natures, in the same manner as he has on the rest of the animal world, all of which express their various feelings by various tones." Only when the voice conveys by the particular tone or note the emotional meaning inherent in language, can the speaker capture the "life, spirit, beauty, and harmony" of delivery.³³

Bodily action includes gestures and looks, by which Abercrombie means facial expression. The goal in bodily action is to achieve grace in execution. Attaining excellence in oral communication which represents a skillful blending of the elements of voice and bodily action is rare, Abercrombie feels, because of an improper educational perspective. He observes, "This deficiency chiefly arises from the general practice of devoting the whole time and attention of our youth to the cultivation of written language, leaving the characteristic and noble powers of speech altogether to the direction of chance, and the impulse of nature."³⁴

³³Ibid., p. 210.

³⁴Ibid., p. 211.

Thus, from an examination of Abercrombie's speech theory as it is presented in the general observations beginning the Compend and the lectures it may be observed that the role of elocution in his system of studies at the Philadelphia Academy complemented style (composition) and logic (invention). In the presentation of his speech theory, he included specific principles of delivery--the proper use of the voice and bodily action in the communication of ideas. The term elocution, which Abercrombie used interchangeably with rhetoric and pronunciation, included only pronunciation. The elaborate and seemingly disproportionate considerations of reading which preceded the discussions of public speaking both in the Compend and the lectures are devoted to elements of vocal delivery and action applicable to each process. It should be recognized, then, that the division in Abercrombie's speech theory is not two-fold, presenting two communicative processes, but is essentially a many-faceted examination of language and its delivery through voice and bodily action in various communicative situations.

Abercrombie wrote from an acknowledged dependence upon his contemporaries whose study of language and delivery he had found interesting. He presented the belles lettres concept that communicative behavior was a natural process and should be approached from a philosophical (or, more correctly, a psychological) examination of communication in man's relationships and activities.

Rhetoric is, then, a process which seeks to relate the communication of ideas to their structured language characteristics. This process relates the following activities:

1. man's natural communication
2. his structuring of ideas in language
3. the analysis of language in order to apprehend both the logical and emotional meanings inherent in language choice
4. the reconstruction of the basic communicative content in meaningful delivery.

Abercrombie's theory of delivery represents a systematic attempt to examine the elements of language behavior, the means of communication, and the manner of relating the two in meaningful presentation of content.

CHAPTER V

ABERCROMBIE'S SPEECH THEORY:

THE VOICE

Instruction in the arts of reading and public speaking in the Philadelphia Academy emphasized the importance of developing the voice as a communicative instrument. James Abercrombie devoted six of his twelve "Lectures on the Arts of Reading and Public Speaking" to the role of the voice in delivery. Specifically, he examined the following areas: articulation, accent (stress), emphasis, quantity (duration), pauses, and tones.

The sources which Abercrombie cited in his discussions of these areas include the writings of the grammarian, Lindley Murray; the orthoepist, Robert Nares; the professor of moral philosophy, James Beattie; the reader and teacher, John Rice; the lexicographer, Samuel Johnson; as well as the better known contributors to the development of rhetorical theory, who include, Thomas Sheridan, John Walker, William Enfield, John Ward, and Hugh Blair.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the areas of vocal delivery which Abercrombie presented and the sources which he employed in his writing.

Articulation

The first division which Abercrombie considers is articulation, which he defines as "the construction and proper use of the organs of speech in producing those various sounds which constitute the human voice."¹ The process involves specifically ". . .those modifications of sounds, by which the letters, syllables, or words of any language are expressed by the operation of the voice, or faculty of speech." Abercrombie recognizes the importance of giving ". . .distinct and audible utterance to all the several sounds of which the words of a language are susceptible." Acknowledging the distinctively oral nature of language, he relates the written symbol to the production of the specific sounds of which words are formed.

He demonstrates this awareness in classifying the various sounds according to their places of articulation--the use of the "organs of speech" among which he includes the teeth, the tongue, the lips, the nostrils, and the throat. He observes that ". . .sounds derive their character from the immediate action of these organs in

¹Port Folio, I (1809), 374.

modulating the air sent out from the lungs."² The dentals, d and t, for example, are produced through the action of the teeth in forming their characteristic sound. Abercrombie lists as other divisions, labials (p, f, and v), gutturals (k, x, and g), and nasals (m, n, ng, nk as in thank, and an as in banquet). He observes that the gutturals should be called palatine or palatals since they are formed ". . . rather by the operation of the palate than by the throat." In many ways this discussion parallels that of Thomas Sheridan. In Sheridan's Lectures on Elocution, he describes four groups of sounds determined by their places of articulation: labials (eb, ev), dentals (ed, et), palatine (eg, ek) and nasals (em, en, ing). Abercrombie's classification is suggestive rather than complete. It represents a conscious attempt to analyze language upon the basis of sound production rather than upon an examination of written symbols.

Abercrombie demonstrates an interest in the physical process of voice production in his description of the organs of speech and their activity. Basing his presentation upon James Beattie's essay, "The Theory of Language," which was first published in 1793, Abercrombie

²Ibid., p. 375. Cf. Thomas Sheridan, Lectures on Elocution (Dublin: 1775), I, 15; Lindley Murray, An English Grammar (7th edition; York: 1842), I, 50; and James Beattie, Works, "The Theory of Language," (Philadelphia: Hopkins & Earle, 1809), II, 26. Beattie seems to have been the source for Abercrombie and Murray on the physical process of voice production.

describes tone production, as follows: "Every time we inspire or draw the air into the mouth, it descends down the throat into the lungs; the same act of inspiration expanding the lungs for the admission of the air and the act of respiration contracting them. The air thus contained in the lungs is sent up the windpipe, or that irregular and knotty tube in the throat, the top of which is called the larynx." In his discussion of the role of the larynx, Abercrombie seems not to have understood the function of the vocal folds in the production of voice. He attributes to the glottis the activity performed by the vocal folds themselves: "This larynx, composed of cartilaginous or gristly substances, expands and contracts at pleasure. In the middle of the larynx is a little hole, called the glottis, not wider than the tenth of an inch, through which the breath and voice are conveyed." The person with a large glottis, he observes, would possess a full, deep toned voice, while the person whose glottis is small would speak with a shrill and sharp voice.

Beattie does not reflect this misconception. He states, in contrast to Abercrombie, "Galen, and many other philosophers, affirm that both the larynx and the windpipe cooperate in rendering the breath vocal. But later authorities have determined, and I think on good grounds that the human voice is produced by two semi-circular membranes in the middle of the larynx which form by

their separation the apperture that is termed the glottis."³

Abercrombie describes the successive steps in voice production in the following manner: "the acuteness or gravity of tone in the human voice depends upon the aperture of the glottis; and its strength or weakness upon the strength or weakness of the lungs, and partly too perhaps upon the shape and magnitude of those cavities in the throat and mouth by which the sound is reverberated."⁴ Reverberation clearly means resonance. Abercrombie notes ". . . as those hollow places in the inside of the mouth and nostrils are by nature better or worse shaped for reverberation, the voice is rendered more or less agreeable." The process of articulation, he notes, begins after the tone has been initiated in the larynx:

"Articulation does not begin till the breath or voice has passed through the larynx." It must be surmised, then, that in this lecture Abercrombie sketches in somewhat general terms the four steps usually considered significant in the formation of human speech: actuation of the vocal folds by the breath stream, phonation, resonance, and articulation. His general presentation is accurate, although he seems to have only a partial understanding of the role

³Beattie, op. cit., II, 22. Beattie in another place speaks of the lips of the glottis.

⁴Ibid., pp. 375-376.

of the vocal folds in phonation. This examination of the physical process of voice production, however, served to apprise his hearers of its general nature and provided background for his continuing examination of articulation.

Abercrombie points to two contrasting problems in articulation, rapid utterance and a lifeless, drawling manner. Lindley Murray discusses these problems in an essay "Observations on the Principles of Good Reading," an introductory section to his work, The English Reader. In the essay, Murray acknowledges credit to Blair and the Encyclopedia Britannica. Abercrombie quoted Murray as follows:

Precipitancy of speech confounds all articulation, and all meaning. . . . A lifeless drawling manner, which allows the minds of the hearers to be always outrunning the speaker, must render every such performance insipid and fatiguing.⁵

To eliminate these problems, he observes, one should ". . . read aloud passages chosen for the purpose; such, for instance, as abound with long and unusual words, or in which many short syllables come together, and to read much slower than the sense and just speaking would require."⁶ Errors in articulation, Abercrombie continues,

⁵Compend, p. 7. Although Abercrombie quotes directly Murray's discussion, in keeping with his practice throughout the Compend, he does not specifically acknowledge his use of this source.

⁶Port Folio, I (1809), 377.

result ". . . from the want of an accurate knowledge of the organs of speech, and the proper direction of their powers, in the formation of these elementary sounds which constitute the basis of correct pronunciation."⁷

Abercrombie notes the difference between vowels and consonants. "The simplest articulate sounds are those which proceed from an open mouth, and are by grammarians called vocal or vowel sounds. When the voice in its passage through the mouth is totally intercepted, or strongly compressed, there is formed a certain modification of articulate sounds, which, as expressed by the character in writing, is called a consonant." The modification or interception of sound occurs through the action of the lips, the palate and tongue, or the tongue and throat. When connected, these basic units of language--vowels and consonants--form syllables. Abercrombie continues, "Language is made up of words, and words are the smallest divisions of speech that have signification."⁸

In his description of language behavior Abercrombie also notes that geographical separation and cultural groupings had resulted in various English dialects. He observes in this regard, "It has often been observed, by foreigners who have acquired through study and

⁷Ibid., p. 379.

⁸Ibid., pp. 378-379. Cf. Beattie, op. cit., p. 52-54.

long practice a perfect command of our language, and even by native Englishmen, that it is generally pronounced with more accuracy and melody in the Middle States of America than in England." He describes dialect variations which were characteristic of inhabitants of England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales.⁹

Abercrombie indicates that there is limited value in a study of etymology and word derivation from Greek or Latin roots in an effort to improve articulation. He praises the prose of Addison, Dryden, Swift and Pope as melodious since they adhere to plain words of English or Saxon development. Less pleasing, however, are the writings of the "profound and acute Dr. Samuel Johnson," because he is continually "...dragging in gigantick terms of Greek and Latin etymology."¹⁰ Abercrombie reiterates his counsel concerning articulation, "...the elementary sounds of our language should be perfectly understood and known, in order to command that accuracy and distinctness of articulation, without which all expectations of being an elegant or even pleasing reader or speaker will

⁹Ibid., p. 379. Cf. Beattie, op. cit., p. 21. Among the variations which Abercrombie cites are the following: omission of the initial h and the substitution of w for y among Englishmen; substitution in Wales of "sharp" consonants and aspirants for "flat" ones-- as p for b, k or c for g, and t for d--substitution of voiceless consonants for voiced ones; in Ireland a modification of the production of the vowels a and e.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 381.

be vain and nugatory."¹¹

The problem of articulation Abercrombie approached from two basic points: first, the physical process of utterance, and second, the units of language structure. Articulation encompasses "... giving a full and distinct utterance to the several simple and complex sounds." While Abercrombie's presentation was general at points, he recommended additional reading in the works of Dr. Nares,¹² Dr. Johnson, Sheridan, Walker, and Murray, whose Grammar contains, according to the lecturer, the "plainest and most concise statement" upon the subject of articulation. Abercrombie should also have mentioned James Beattie, whose "essay on language" provided specifically the material for his discussion of the physical process of voice production, and in general, his point of view.

Accent

Abercrombie considers accent as a second division of vocal delivery. In the Compend he defines accent as "... the laying of a peculiar stress of the voice on a certain letter or syllable in a word, that it may be better heard than the rest, or distinguished from them."¹³

¹¹ Ibid., p. 382.

¹² Robert Nares, Elements of Orthoepy (London: T. Payne and Son, 1784).

¹³ Compend, pp. 22-23. Cf. Murray, Grammar, p. 345.

In his early work Abercrombie states the nature of stress as dwelling longer upon one syllable than the others or giving it a smarter percussion of the voice. He indicates that ". . . accent is to be considered as referring not to tune but to time, not to quality, but to quantity; not to the variation of the note, or inflexions of the human voice, but to the more equable or precipitate motion of it." It becomes clear that in the lectures Abercrombie's acceptance of this position which is essentially that of Sheridan has been altered.

When he considers the definition of stress in the lectures, Abercrombie points to a controversy among authorities concerning the nature of the distinction which sets the stressed syllable apart. He indicates, "Whether this distinction relates merely to the stress or force of the voice, or to the variation of tone, are questions which have agitated and disturbed the republic of letters for centuries. . . ." Among "modern combatants" over the question, Abercrombie mentions particularly Thomas Sheridan and John Walker. Sheridan, whose position Abercrombie had supported in the Compend, asserts that accent has reference only to quantity, not to quality, and that, of course, the accented syllable is only louder, and not higher than the other syllables. Walker, on the other hand, maintains that accent related to quality not to quantity, to tone or tune, not to strength.¹⁴

¹⁴Port Folio, I (1809), 498. Cf. Sheridan, op. cit., I, 63 and John Walker, Elements of Elocution (London: 1781), II, 11-12.

Abercrombie seems to have accepted the opinion of Walker. Perhaps, however, he found additional support from the orthoepist, Robert Nares, since Abercrombie's statement of his position is strongly reminiscent of Nares:

The truth is, that to give eminence to an accent, an enunciation is necessary. But the eminent accent of words, in English speech, with superior force, has also, by the indispensable law of that speech, a higher tone, and is. . .an acute. Without variety of tone. . . without various notes, though there might be measure there could be no melody in speech. It would therefore be highly injurious to our language to hold that the accent of English words derives its character from force of utterance only.¹⁵

In the English language, Abercrombie maintains, accent is a species of emphasis, and is dependent more upon the sense of what is said than upon any external rules. While this seems to be his understanding of the nature of accent, his methodical investigation led him to determine that in monosyllables accent and emphasis must be the same. He qualifies this conclusion, however, by observing that ". . .those monosyllables alone have any accent which are capable of being emphatical. . . [as] monosyllabic nouns and verbs. . . ."

To support his view that accent relates to meaning, Abercrombie states further ". . .when words of different meaning are contrasted,

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 499. Cf. Nares, op. cit., pp. 141ff.

the accent of one is often changed from its natural seat to that distinctive syllable which the opposition has rendered emphatical." He cites, as an example, the sentence: Some men are sociable, some UNsociable.¹⁶

In the lectures Abercrombie repeated a discussion which he had included in the Compend concerning the nature of accent in languages other than English. He notes that among the ancients, accent ". . . signified a musical modulation of the voice, making it higher or lower with respect to gravity or acuteness of sound." He discusses the three grammatical accents of the Greek and Latin languages: the acute, the grave, and the circumflex, which indicate respectively an upward inflection, a downward inflection, and a combination of upward and downward inflections--"an undulation of the voice."¹⁷ Hebrew, he continues, has a grammatical, a rhetorical, and a musical accent. These accents serve not only to regulate the risings and fallings of the voice, but distinguish the sections and periods in a discourse. What he calls the tonic accents assist in the musical quality of Hebrew--a chanting or singing of the language. The Chinese and Siamese languages are more complex since a single syllable could possess five different accents, each characterized by a change in tone

¹⁶Ibid., p. 496. Cf. Nares, op. cit., p. 141. Here Abercrombie largely paraphrased Nares' discussion.

¹⁷Compend, p. 24.

which alters the meaning of the word.¹⁸ Discussions similar to Abercrombie's on the nature and development of languages may be found in James Beattie's essay and Thomas Sheridan's writings. Probably these materials formed the background for his discussion. There are indications, as well, that Abercrombie was a student of classical languages, and he may have derived these observations from his independent study.

Having completed his general survey of accent in other languages, Abercrombie turns to the task of clarifying the nature of English accent. He observes, ". . .the English, as they have no more than one accent, have only one mark in writing to point it out; viz. the acute accent of the Greeks. . . ." ¹⁹ The principal accent distinguishes one syllable in a word from the others. Secondary accent, he continues ". . .is that stress which we may occasionally place upon another syllable, beside that which has the principal accent, in order to pronounce every part of the word more distinctly, forcibly and harmoniously. . . ." The secondary stress is "somewhat less forcible" than the principal accent.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 25.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 26. Cf. Sheridan, op. cit., II, 65 and Murray, Grammar, I, 346.

Abercrombie suggests that common usage should dictate the placing of accent. He paraphrases an admonition of William Enfield, who states, "In accenting words, care should be taken to avoid all affected deviations from common usage."²⁰ Abercrombie discounts the validity of an arbitrarily determined rule which holds that in words of more than two syllables the accent should be thrown back as far as possible. He maintains that this rule has no basis in the structure of English or in the principles of harmony. In fact, he continues, this rule has ". . . occasioned much pedantic and irregular pronunciation. . . ."

Lindley Murray's discussion of accent in his English Grammar formed the basis for Abercrombie's examination of the rules of accentuation which he presented in his lectures. The first "law of accentuation" which Abercrombie cites is, as follows: "Accent generally dwells with greatest force and propriety, on that part of the word which, from its importance, the hearer has always the greatest occasion to observe; and this is necessarily the root or body of the word." Since, however, "harmony of termination frequently attracts the accent from the root to the branches of the word," ". . . this law operates less in fixing stress than any other. Etymology, Abercrombie notes, regulates accent in many instances. In Saxon

²⁰Ibid., p. 26. Cf. William Enfield, The Speaker or Miscellaneous Pieces Selected from the Best English Writers (London: 1774), p. xv.

words accent falls on the root; in Latin and Greek, on the termination; and, in addition, usage dictates stress to distinguish some words from others. Thus, he concludes, ". . . we seem to have three great principles of accentuation, viz., the radical, the terminational, and the distinctive. As examples of each of these he cites: the radical, love, lovely, and loveliness; the terminational, harmony, harmonious; and, the distinctive, a convert, to convert.²¹

Abercrombie's views on standard speech may be contrasted with those of Beattie. The former observes:

Of accent, as well as of spelling, and of idiom, there is a standard in every polite nation, and in all these particulars, the example of approved authors, and the practice of those, who by their rank, education, and way of life, have had the best opportunities to know men and manner, and domestic and foreign literature, ought undoubtedly to possess considerable influence.²²

He concludes, then, ". . . that accent and that pronunciation is generally in every country accounted the best, which is used in the metropolis, by the most polite and learned persons." Beattie's conclusion was that the language of the most learned and polite persons in London, and the neighboring universities, Oxford and

²¹Port Folio, I (1809), 501. Cf. Murray, Grammar, I, 347. Murray is one of the "writers upon grammar" whom Abercrombie cites for the rules governing accent. He also recommends the writings of Lowth, Johnson and Walker.

²²Ibid., p. 502.

Cambridge, ". . . ought to be accounted the standard of the English tongue, especially in accent and pronunciation. . . ." ²³

Abercrombie calls attention to the laws of accentuation formulated by Lindley Murray. He includes a summary of rules in the Compend, among which are the following representative ones:

Disyllables have necessarily one of them accented, and but one. [Abercrombie cites as an exception the word a-men.]

Disyllables formed by affixing a termination, have generally the former accent, as childish. . . .

Trisyllables which have their accent on the last syllable are commonly French; as acquiesce. . . . ²⁴

It may be ascertained, then, that Abercrombie derived his presentation of accent principally from three sources, Nares's Elements of Orthoepy, Murray's English Grammar, and Beattie's "The Theory of Language." He sought to present a definition of accent, a comparison of English accentuation with that in other language systems, and general principles of accent which were to assist his students in determining proper stress. Abercrombie suggested a criterion for determining standard pronunciation and stress which would presently find wide acceptance--the speech of the educated and polite residents within the region. Abercrombie

²³ Beattie, op. cit., II, 97.

²⁴ Compend, pp. 29-30. Cf. Murray, Grammar, I, 347-349.

fulfilled his purpose in presenting general information upon which his students could build skill in accepted oral usage.

Emphasis

The third general division of Abercrombie's consideration of voice is emphasis. He offers the following definition of this area of delivery: "The word Emphasis, etymologically considered, means signification or force."²⁵ He continues, "When applied to speech [it] imports the marking by the voice any word or words in a phrase or sentence, as more important than the rest." In the Compend he suggests that emphasis distinguishes some word or words upon which the speaker desires to place particular stress in order. ". . .to show how they affect the rest of the sentence."²⁶ The speaker uses emphasis through an increase of force, by variation of tone, by extension of time in enunciation, or by any two or all of these together. While accent is achieved through a "dilitation of the glottis," Abercrombie notes, emphasis is achieved by the lungs through control of the outgoing breath stream.²⁷ The use of emphasis depends upon the meaning of a passage, and may be varied as the meaning changes.

²⁵Port Folio, II (1809), 1.

²⁶Compend, p. 31.

²⁷Port Folio, II (1809), 1-2. Cf. Beattie, op. cit., II, 90.

The modes of emphasis Abercrombie lists as follows: ". . . affirmation, interrogation, admiration, surprise, indignation, complaint, or any other intention or affection of the mind. . . ."

In the Compend Abercrombie maintains that the only means for finding the emphatical word lies in determining a ". . . just conception of the force and spirit of the sentiments which he [the speaker/reader] is to pronounce."²⁸ In the lectures Abercrombie objects to this procedure for determining emphasis. He observes that writers have generally advised

. . . that we must place the emphasis on that word in reading which we would make emphatical in speaking [while]. . . no assistance is given us to determine which is the emphatic word, where several appear equally emphatical. . . . The sense of the author is the whole direction we are referred to, and consequently all is left to the taste and understanding of the reader.²⁹

To remedy this omission, Abercrombie turns to the principles of emphasis which John Walker presents in his Elements of Elocution.

The principal circumstance that distinguishes emphatical words from others seems to be a meaning which points out or distinguishes something as distinct or opposite to some other thing. When this opposition is expressed in words, it forms an antithesis, the opposite parts of which are always emphatical.³⁰

²⁸Compend, pp. 34-35.

²⁹Port Folio, II (1809), 2-3. Walker makes a similar observation. Cf. Walker, op. cit., II, 16.

³⁰Ibid., p. 3. Cf. Walker, op. cit., II, 27ff.

Abercrombie follows Walker's ideas, accepting the concept that the principal determinant of emphasis is antithesis--either expressed or understood. He does not, however, state the concept as dogmatically as Walker, who concludes his presentation with the following summary: "Emphasis, when applied to particular words, is that stress we lay on words which are in contradistinction to other words either expressed or understood. . . . Whenever there is contradistinction in the sense of the words, there ought to be emphasis in the pronunciation of them. . . whenever we place emphasis we suggest the idea of contradistinction."³¹ Abercrombie substitutes the term antithesis throughout his discussion for contradistinction.

Emphasis, the lecturer continues, is of two kinds: simple, which merely serves to point out the plain meaning of any proposition, and complex, which conveys in addition some emotion of the mind. Abercrombie assumes a position more nearly that of Murray than that of Walker when he suggests that the reader depends upon his own understanding of the written form in determining the use of complex emphasis. He states:

Everyone who understands what he reads, cannot fail of finding out every emphatic word; and his business then is to mark it properly, not by stress

³¹Walker, op. cit., II, 36-37.

only, as in the accented syllable, but by change of note suited to the matter which constitutes the essence of emphasis.³²

To understand complex emphasis, then, one must find the proper expressive note. To find the proper note one ". . . must not only understand but feel the sentiments of the author. . . ."

While Abercrombie admits that emotion and feeling determine to an important degree the placement and force of emphasis, his interest in language per se asserted itself as he admonishes his readers, "Emphasis. . . must ever be considered as subject to the precision of grammatical truth. . . ." He continues, ". . . for if a correct observance of the laws of orthography and syntax do not accompany the reader's orthoepy and emphasis, his oratory will be but as 'sounding brass' or a 'tinkling cymbal'." Abercrombie rejects as invalid the cultivation of elocution--techniques of delivery--in preference to the basic communicative goal of speaking. He states:

The object of language is to communicate information to the mind, or improvement to the understanding which are certainly more important than merely impressing or pleasing the ear with the force of sound by emphasis: for though that may be necessary to awaken attention and thereby to enforce sentiment, it would be better that such attention should remain asleep, than to be awakened by those means which serve to mislead the judgement and to communicate error.³³

³²Port Folio, II (1809), 6-7. Cf. Murray, Grammar, I, 357-385.

³³Port Folio, II (1809), 8.

Abercrombie concludes his discussion of emphasis by summarizing its significance to oral reading. He observes, "Reading should be considered as nothing more than speaking at sight by the assistance of letters. . . ." ³⁴ The goal implied in this definition--reading as one naturally speaks--depends upon a proper understanding of both the logical and emotional meaning inherent in language. Abercrombie seems in this regard to have followed the Rhetorical Grammar attributed to Thomas Sheridan, since he paraphrases the work as follows: "All that passes in the mind of man may be reduced to two classes--ideas and emotions. By ideas, I mean all thoughts which rise and pass in succession in the mind: by emotion, all exertions of the mind, which arise from the operation of the passions. Words are the signs of the one, tones of the other." ³⁵

In his presentation of the principles of emphasis, then, Abercrombie defined the concept, isolated the problem of selecting the emphatic word or words, and projected several solutions. These include the following: first, find the author's meaning; second, through an examination of the structure and sense of the message, determine the presence of antithesis in the author's expression;

³⁴ Ibid., p. 8.

³⁵ Cf. Thomas Sheridan, Rhetorical Grammar (Philadelphia: 1738), p. 97.

and third, understand the author's logical and emotional meanings. Abercrombie insisted upon the primacy of communicating ideas and he observed that this could best be accomplished through a sensitive understanding of the principles of emphasis in reading and speaking.

Quantity

As a fourth division of vocal delivery Abercrombie discusses quantity. For the basis of his presentation of this area of his subject he depended heavily upon the writings of Robert Nares, whose Elements of Orthoepy (1784) Abercrombie employed throughout his examination of vocal delivery, particularly for his discussions of accent and quantity.

In the Compend Abercrombie seems to have confused quantity with an element of pitch variation. He observes, "The Quantity of the voice consists in its highness or lowness, swiftness or slowness, and the intermediate degrees between them." He implies a relationship between duration and pitch change by advocating variety in vocal delivery. He notes:

. . . equality [when the voice produces a calm, sedate, moderate sound] , . . . admits a variety of changes within the same pitch. And when that is altered, the gradations, whether higher or lower, should be so gentle and regular as to preserve a due proportion of the parts and harmony of the whole; which cannot be done, when the voice is suddenly varied with too great a distinction.³⁶

³⁶Compend, p. 11.

Abercrombie warns against speaking too rapidly or too slowly, suggesting that speaking with justness and propriety must become habitual.

In the lectures he limits his consideration of quantity more precisely. He adapts Nares' definition, as follows: "Quantity is the word generally adopted by grammarians to express the relative length of syllables."³⁷ Syllables spoken rapidly are short; those in which ". . . the voice is retarded in utterance" are long. He observes, however, that these designations are not exact--that the duration of syllables varies greatly.

Long and short syllables result from the duration of the vowel sounds. In addition, he suggests, a retardation of the voice occurs through a "concurrence of consonants." He points out further, "If we consider every consonant in a syllable as requiring some time, however little, for its articulation, it will follow, that every syllable, excluding the consideration of the vowel, must increase in length according to the number of its consonants." Basing his discussion upon this principle Abercrombie presents a scheme of gradation of syllables from the shortest of the short to the longest of the long: a short vowel with a single consonant, as for example, it, through a short vowel with the greatest number of consonants, as, strands.

³⁷ Port Folio, II (1809), 293. Cf. Nares, op. cit., p. 204.

The same procedure could be employed with long vowels.³⁸

Following Nares' discussion closely, Abercrombie contrasts the composition of long and short syllables in Greek and Latin, which he observes, depends upon the number and position of consonants, with the system in English of determining the duration of syllables by the nature of the vowel in each case. Since mistakes in quantity are not uncommon, he observes, the rules for quantity should be ascertained. For assistance in spelling, he recommends the rules in the orthography of Murray's larger grammar. The rules for quantity, which he presents, however, he derives from Nares' Elements of Orthoepy. Among these, he includes the following:

1. A vowel followed by a consonant in the same syllable is short; as bat, testify, kill, organ, butler.
2. A vowel which ends a syllable in an accented penultimate (or syllable before the last) is long: as, bacon, genus, trifle, cogent, potato, decorum.
4. A vowel in an accented antipenultimate (or last syllable but two) though not followed by a consonant in the same syllable is short; as gratify, editor, origin, N. B. the vowel u is not affected by this rule; as lucubrate, puberty, studious. . . .
6. Diphthongs are naturally long, except oo, which has its short sound like a single vowel as good, wood, foot, book, cook, etc. It is liable to

³⁸ Ibid., p. 294.

some irregularities being sometimes pronounced like long o, as in door, floor, etc. and sometimes like u short, as in blood, flood, etc.³⁹

Abercrombie admits that due to the irregularity of our language, many exceptions to these rules could be found. He summarizes the rules in two generalizations: a syllable is long when the vowel is accented; it is short when the consonant is accented. Contrasting the difficulty of determining quantity in classical languages with that in English, he discounts the practice of basing the prosody of a living language upon that of a dead one. Abercrombie asserts in this regard his belief that it is more profitable to study English as the vehicle for the communication of ideas than to focus attention upon the classical languages. He observes, "With regard to a living language a man has nothing to do but listen with attention, to be able in a very short time to judge with tolerable accuracy the length of single sounds."⁴⁰

Abercrombie alludes to an opinion expressed by Johnson that accent and quantity in English versification were the same. In this particular, Abercrombie disagrees with Johnson, and accepts the

³⁹Port Folio, II (1809), 294-295. Cf. Nares, *op. cit.*, pp. 216-218. The exceptions to the rules which Nares also included occupy pages 222-246.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, p. 295.

views of John Rice, a noted and respected reader and lecturer, whose work, An Introduction to the Art of Reading with Energy and Propriety appeared in 1765. Abercrombie observes that subordinating quantity to a metrical form destroyed the sense and beauty of the poetic form by forcing the reader to contract words and combine syllables. He maintains that ". . . the harmony of verse principally consists. . . in the consonance or affinity which the words of such verse bear to that meaning, or in their propriety or aptitude to express that meaning. . . ." ⁴¹ He concludes that it is necessary to attend to both when reading with propriety. Abercrombie illustrates his view, as follows:

Hence, though in reading the heroic measure in blank verse, the principles of harmony require the observance of the final pause at the end of each line, yet too slavish an observance of the classical mode of scanning by long and short syllables, and the exact modulation of feet and measure, would produce such a degree of mechanical stiffness, as would not only effectually destroy the proper harmony of the verse, and just expression of the sentiment, but render it altogether disgusting to an English ear, being so diametrically opposed to the genius and idiom of our language. ⁴²

Abercrombie turns from quantity in poetry to quantity in prose.

Concerning the latter he observes that the harmony of prose does

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 297. Cf. John Rice, An Introduction to the Art of Reading with Energy and Propriety (London: 1765), pp. 110-114.

⁴² Ibid.

not depend upon any regular return of long or short syllables or accented and unaccented syllables. Instead, good prose demands a disposition of long and short syllables which is easy to pronounce and which expresses the sense. Many long syllables coming together make a style rough and heavy; many short syllables provide nothing to support the voice.⁴³ He concludes this discussion by admonishing his readers to cultivate a style which provides variety in the relative length of syllables.

Abercrombie's interest in duration of vowels or syllables stems from his concern with the structure of language and its grammatical basis. He explores the factors which determine quantity, and then suggests how these factors relate to effective reading and speaking. He concludes, in general, that attention to quantity is essential to variety of expression, and specifically, that in reading, quantity assists in the differentiation between poetry and prose.

Pauses

Abercrombie introduces the fifth division of vocal delivery, pauses, in the Compend with a discussion based upon the introductory essay which William Enfield included in his work, The Speaker, a collection of selections for oral reading. Abercrombie observes

⁴³Ibid., p. 298.

that pauses are necessary for control of the voice and for communicating the construction and meaning of each sentence. He continues, "An uninterrupted rapidity of utterance is one of the worst faults in Elocution. Without pauses, the spirit of what is delivered, must be lost and the sense must appear confused and may even be misrepresented in a manner most absurd and contradictory."⁴⁴ Abercrombie warns that this is not enough for the reader or speaker to observe punctuation marks. Mechanical attention to these "resting places" is one cause of monotony, leading to a "uniform cadence at every full period." The punctuation marks, Abercrombie notes, assist the reader in discerning the grammatical construction of a passage, but only indirectly do they regulate his pronunciation. The power of suspending the voice at his discretion, apart from punctuation marks, enables the reader to give ". . . a much higher degree of force to the sentiment and increases the attention of the hearer. . . ."⁴⁵ Pauses, then, are of two kinds: the suspending, which conveys the idea of continuation, and the completion, which is the closing pause. In this manner, Enfield and Abercrombie seem to combine inflection and pause, since inflectional variation is the basis for the division which they cite. This connection, between

⁴⁴ Compend, p. 48-49. Cf., William Enfield, op. cit., p. xix-xx.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 50.

pauses and inflection, receives specific attention in the lectures. Abercrombie notes, "The two principles of pause and tone are more intimately connected together than any other two of the five which constitute the correct pronunciation of written language; and they mutually affect each other. . . ." ⁴⁶

Observing that pauses in reading and speaking are equally necessary to give precision and expression to the sentiment, Abercrombie notes that rhetoricians ". . . have been greatly perplexed about their nature and application." Some consider them as arbitrarily determined by the taste of the reader while others confine them to grammatical rules, ". . . by which certain parts of speech are kept together, and others divided. . . without regard to those colloquial pauses and tones by which the energy of sentiment is more forcibly conveyed." ⁴⁷

Abercrombie resolves this disparity by suggesting that pauses should be considered as related both to grammar and rhetoric. ⁴⁸ He suggests, "a system of punctuation may be sufficient for the purpose of grammar. . . to clear and preserve the sense of an author, and, at the same time, be a very imperfect guide to the pronunciation

⁴⁶ Port Folio, II (1809), 402.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 403.

⁴⁸ Compend, p. 54.

of it." Abercrombie explains the point by observing that the art of reading, though founded on grammar, has principles of its own, ". . . arising from the nature of the living voice, from the perception of harmony in the ear, and from a certain superadditive to the sense of language, of which grammar takes no notice."⁴⁹

In the interval between the writing of the Compend and the composition of the lectures Abercrombie discovered Walker's system of grammatical and rhetorical, or visible and audible punctuation. In the lecture on pauses he adds a significant clause to the statement concluding his general observations in the Compend: "These principles [of pauses inherent in spoken English] necessarily influence our pronunciation and direct us to pauses, which are entirely unknown to every system of punctuation in use." He continues the sentence in the lecture on pauses, ". . . except that of the ingenious and elaborate Mr. Walker. . . ." Abercrombie cites both of Walker's works, Elements of Elocution and Rhetorical Grammar as "valuable effusions of judgement, taste, and genius."

Summarizing the basic rules for pausing derived from the sense of the selection and the various punctuation marks, Abercrombie divides pauses into two categories. First, he lists grammatical or sentential pauses which mark division of the sense and are suggested

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 55.

by commas, semi-colons, colons, periods, interrogatory marks, exclamatory marks, and parentheses. The second category includes the emphatical pauses, ". . . which are made when something is said of peculiar moment, on which we wish to fix the hearer's attention." These frequently are not indicated by punctuation marks.⁵⁰

Abercrombie presents specific rules for the grammatical or sentential pauses which he derived from Murray's grammar and from Walker. Among these, he includes the following:

The comma usually separates those parts of a sentence which, though very closely connected in sense and construction require a short pause between them. . . without any change of tone. . . .

The semicolon is used for dividing a compound sentence into two or more parts. . . .

A colon is used to divide a sentence in two or more parts less connected than those which are separated by a semicolon. . . .

A period should be used when a sentence is complete and independent, and not connected in construction with the following sentence.

The dash. . . indicates a sudden interruption or fragment of a sentence, or where an emphatical pause is required.

The note of interrogation is used after the expression of a question. . . .

The note of exclamation is applied to express sudden emotions of the mind indicative of surprise, joy, grief, etc. . . .

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 403.

A parenthesis marks a clause containing some explanatory information or remark which may be omitted without impairing the sense of the sentence. . . .⁵¹

Abercrombie does not elaborate upon the pause necessitated in delivery by these marks of punctuation. He comments that interrogative and exclamatory marks are indeterminate in quantity or time and that they mark an elevation of the voice. Concerning the length of the pauses he observes, ". . . the rest which they imply [depends] . . . altogether on the nature of the composition: the pause at the comma, semicolon, etc. being greater in serious and solemn compositions than in gay: though the exact proportion between them should always be observed."⁵² Concerning the parenthesis he observes that it requires a moderate depression of the voice at its commencement, which should be continued in a quickened pace till it terminates; when the same tone should be resumed which you observed before its commencement. "

Abercrombie offers no specific rules for the emphatical pauses. He warns against using it too frequently, "For as it excites uncommon attention, and of course raises expectation; if the importance of the matter be not fully answerable to such expectation, it occasions

⁵¹Ibid., p. 403-406; Cf. Murray, Grammar, pp. 392-409.

⁵²Ibid., p. 408.

disappointment and disgust."⁵³

Pauses to be employed in the reading of verse, Abercrombie continues, include the harmonic pauses--the cesural and final. The first of these divides the line of poetry into equal or unequal parts. The final pause occurs at the end of the line, closes the verse, and marks the measure or rhythm of the poem. He observes, "The final preserves the melody and produces the harmony of verse without interfering with the sense."⁵⁴ It marks the difference between prose and verse.

In summary Abercrombie again points out that both grammatical construction and a sensitivity to oral discourse should dictate the proper use of pauses. He notes, "The great error which prevails with respect to the use of. . . [pauses] is, that they are more attended to and regulated according to the rules of grammar in the construction of a sentence, than to the customary modes of speaking. . . ."⁵⁵

The lecturer includes, finally, a brief discussion of the development of punctuation. To reinforce his insistence upon the importance of pauses in discourse, he quotes Sheridan as follows: "Pauses. . . answer the same end that shades do in pictures; and by the proper use

⁵³Ibid., p. 406. Cf. Murray, Grammar, I, 364.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 407.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 408.

of which the objects stand out distinctly to the eye; and without which, were the colors to run into one another, it would be difficult to discriminate the several figures of the composition."⁵⁶ He then paraphrases Sheridan's advice: "In order to get the better of this bad habit of running sentences and their members too quickly into one another, he [Sheridan] recommends it to every reader to make all his pauses longer than is necessary, till by degrees he brings them to their due proportion. "

In his treatment of pauses, Abercrombie's interest in language and his sensitivity as a reader and speaker merged to form a philosophy of vocal delivery which emphasized the importance of rate and pauses. He maintained throughout his discussion that skillful use of pauses would enhance the communicative content of ideas.

Tones

Abercrombie's consideration of the sixth element of vocal delivery was less specifically delineated than were the other four divisions. He defines this area of voice, suggesting that it relates ". . .to the nature, modulation, and operation of the human voice, in forming, by its inflexions, those many expressions of sentiment and passion which give energy to language and efficacy to thought."⁵⁷ Under this topic

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 410.

⁵⁷ Port Folio, III (1810), 151.

he discusses pitch, inflection, variety, force or volume, and projection.

In the Compend Abercrombie treats several of these subjects. He advises his students to attend to "the proper pitch and management of the voice." He continues, "Every person has three pitches in his voice; the high, the middle, and the low. The high is that which he uses in calling aloud to some person at a distance. The low is used when he approaches to a whisper. The middle is that which he employs in common conversation. . . ." ⁵⁸ Perhaps Abercrombie and Murray derived this statement from Blair, since all three of them included it in their discussions of tone. ⁵⁹ Abercrombie partially corrects the error in the lectures, when he includes for the three pitches these additional characteristics: "The high is that which he uses under a violent passion. . . the low is used under great depression of mind. . . the middle is that which is employed in conversation." ⁶⁰ He seems still to have confused the concepts pitch and volume.

Under the heading qualities Abercrombie describes the

⁵⁸ Compend, pp. 3-4.

⁵⁹ Cf. Murray, Reader, p. xiv., and Hugh Blair, Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres (New York: Collins and Co., 1819), p. 366.

⁶⁰ Port Folio, III (1810), 151.

characteristics of voice, which include strength or weakness, clearness or obscurity, fullness or smallness, smoothness or roughness. He suggests that in each case the former characteristics are preferred, but that ". . . it is not in our power to give ourselves what qualities of voice we please; we have only to make the best use of what nature has bestowed upon us."⁶¹ He notes that several defects of voice may be improved through care and proper management.

Abercrombie quotes Sheridan in support of the view that man in an uncivilized state varied his utterance in keeping with the emotions of his mind. This natural expression was immediately and universally intelligible. He indicates that "In this state the people all speak the emphatic language; and the variety of sounds, result from the nature of the sentiments they express."⁶² Abercrombie implies that man naturally communicates through his voice the emotions which he feels. That this characteristic has been inhibited necessitates a study of vocal expression and practice.

Abercrombie explains the physiological basis of vocal variety, suggesting, "The variety of tones in the human voice arises partly from the dimensions of the windpipe. . . , but principally from the

⁶¹Compend, p. 14.

⁶²Port Folio, III (1810), 151. While Abercrombie cites Sheridan, the passage seems paraphrased from James Beattie's discussion of the development of language. Cf. Beattie, op. cit., p. 97.

size of the larynx. . . , or rather from the diameter of the glottis . . . the tone of voice being more or less grave, according to the diameter of the glottis."⁶³ The resultant variation in tone affects the feelings of the hearers, ". . . to raise or allay. . . passions." From an awareness of the power of sound, Abercrombie continues, "It has ever been considered by the best writers in all languages as a peculiar beauty in the art of composition, to render the sound expressive of their sentiments, or an echo to the sense."

Again Abercrombie affirms his belief that the tone of voice naturally varies according to the feelings of the speaker without conscious attention. The speaker or reader must, therefore, ". . . follow nature and. . . endeavour that the tone of his voice appear natural and unaffected."⁶⁴ The lecturer advocates the speaker's use of his "natural key" and his cultivation of a "clear voice" through attention, diligence, perseverance, and correct instruction.

In keeping with his view that tones must reflect natural responses, Abercrombie observes, "Polite conversation seems to be the best groundwork of the tones of delivery. . . ." He suggests

⁶³Ibid., p. 152. Cf. Beattie, op. cit., p. 27 ff. Abercrombie seems to have derived some of his ideas about the physiological process of tone quality from Beattie, although the position expressed in this passage is different from that expressed by Beattie.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 153. Cf. Enfield, op. cit., p. xxiii.

that the speaker should imitate the cadences which occur in conversations where men are in earnest and express themselves as prompted by the natural feelings of their minds.⁶⁵

Abercrombie returns to the central point of his lecture in suggesting that tones are of two kinds: natural and artificial. The natural he had previously explained--man's spontaneous expression in "his animal state." In contrast, artificial tones derive from accepted methods of expressing feeling determined by common consent and differing from country to country. The natural tones reflecting the various passions--pity, anger, hatred--must reinforce the sentiment expressing these passions. Abercrombie notes that the speaker will be deficient in expression if he does not feel at the time the passions he would express: ". . .without the assumption of character, there can be no true eloquence."⁶⁶ That few speakers excel in delivery, combining effectively tones, looks, and gesture, Abercrombie attributes to an omission in the educational practices of his period. "This deficiency chiefly arises from devoting the whole time and attention of our youth to the cultivation of written language, leaving the characteristic and noble powers of speech

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 154. Cf. Blair, op. cit., p. 375-376.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 155.

altogether to the direction of chance, and the impulse of nature."⁶⁷

Abercrombie depends upon Walker for his discussion of the relation between tone variation and inflections. He quotes the "ingenious Mr. Walker" as stating "the primary division of speaking sounds is into the upward and downward slide of the voice, and that whatever diversity of time, tone, or force is added to speaking, it must necessarily be conveyed by these two slides. These two slides, or inflexions of voice, therefore, are the axis. . . on which the force, variety and harmony of speaking turn."⁶⁸ Concluding the discussion, Abercrombie recommends further examination of the subject in the writings of Walker, Sheridan, Blair, and Kames.

With the completion of his lecture on tones, Abercrombie had surveyed the principles of vocal delivery. He provides as a summary a recapitulation of the essential concepts which he had presented in these lectures. For an over-view of Abercrombie's lectures on vocal delivery, and as an indication of the significance which the lecturer attributed to the ideas which he presented, the following summary may be examined:

1. Take pains to obtain a perfect knowledge of the sounds of all the letters in general.
2. Never guess at a word, or you will acquire a habit of reading falsely.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 155-156.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 156. Cf. Walker, op. cit., II, 121-140.

3. Pronounce every word with its proper accent, clearly and distinctly; a distinct articulation being essentially necessary to a good reader, and the very basis of the art.

4. Let the tones of your voice in reading be the same as in speaking.

5. Do not read in a hurry, or you will acquire a habit of hesitating and stammering.

6. Read so loud as to be heard by all about you, but not louder.

7. Observe your pauses well, and never make any where the sense does not require it.

8. Consider well the place of emphasis in a sentence, and pronounce it accordingly.

9. Be careful not to speak through the nose, or with the teeth closed, but open your mouth sufficiently to give a distinct utterance.

10. Endeavour to enter into the spirit of your author, and to give every sentiment its appropriate expression.⁶⁹

Adherence to these rules, Abercrombie observes, would assist the reader in attaining a good pronunciation--"a natural, easy, and graceful variation of the voice, suited to the nature and importance of the sentiments we utter."

Abercrombie devoted considerable attention to vocal delivery in the lectures and in the Compend. He examined each of the topics of the six lectures--articulation, accent, emphasis, quantity, pauses, and tones--in both of his works, although usually the development

⁶⁹Ibid., pp. 158-159.

of the areas in the earlier writing was less extensive. There is no doubt that vocal delivery represented the major area of Abercrombie's presentation of the principles of reading and speaking. What specifically did Abercrombie contribute to this area of his subject?

First, it must be realized that Abercrombie's theory, influenced by the belles lettres tradition, attached a renewed significance to the relation between the structure of language and its oral presentation. In his theory the cycle inherent in this approach received expression. The belles lettres school held that language developed naturally in answer to man's basic communicative needs. The resultant form became stabilized and susceptible to critical, descriptive analysis. Grammar, the discipline based upon language structure, became the criterion for determining oral usage in accent, emphasis, quantity, pauses, tones, and, to a limited extent, articulation. Delivery of language became dependent upon grammar with the prospect of achieving "natural" delivery through an understanding of the structured, stabilized forms. This naturally led to an emphasis upon oral reading--the presentation of written language as stabilized, structured thought. The cycle which Abercrombie seems to have completed, then, proceeds from natural communication to stabilized language, to grammar or the structure of language, to delivery based upon structure to approximate "natural" expression.

Second, Abercrombie's sources support this conclusion. He

drew upon the grammatical studies of Lindley Murray, the work in accent, emphasis and quantity of Robert Nares, the rules of Samuel Johnson, and the writings of Thomas Sheridan, whose educational theories and investigations into orthoepy as well as his principles of reading and speaking were influential in the formulation of Abercrombie's views. His dependence upon James Beattie broadened Abercrombie's perspective to include the psychological-epistemological orientation which characterized his discussions of language behavior and the natural phenomena of speaking. His purpose, to provide principles which would be instructive to students desiring to improve oral communication skills, led him to the studies of the rhetoricians of his day--Walker, Enfield, and Blair. From these writers and his experience, Abercrombie derived the practical application of principle to communicative situations--reading and public speaking.

What then was Abercrombie's task in this presentation? He states it as an explanation of his contribution at the conclusion to his lecture on tones: "The business of a lecturer is not so much to dilate and elucidate a subject with new thoughts and original suggestions, as to delineate the great outlines of it; to bring into an easy and comprehensive view the authorities on which his assertions are founded; and to commit the filling up of those outlines, and the completion of the work to the diligence and exertion of the

student in his closet, by a due consideration of the principles laid down, and an attentive perusal of the authors referred to."⁷⁰ In accomplishing this task Abercrombie contributed little in the way of original ideas. He derived from his many sources a body of theory which supported his position that in structure and form of language the principles of oral delivery of content may be found.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 158.

CHAPTER VI

ABERCROMBIE'S SPEECH THEORY:

BODILY ACTION

James Abercrombie wrote primarily about delivery in both his Compend on Elocution and his "Lectures on the Arts of Reading and Public Speaking." He methodically divided his consideration of delivery into two broad categories--voice and bodily activity--for ease in presenting the essential information about each area. The divisions within the categories assisted in the systematic analyses and exemplifications which formed the basis for his presentation. Abercrombie evidenced an awareness, however, that the areas of his subject which he isolated were in no way independent of one another. When he examined emphasis, for example, he related its principles to his previous comments upon accent. In much the same way his discussions of the two divisions of bodily action--looks and gestures--referred to principles of vocal delivery already examined, particularly to his lecture on tones. Abercrombie attempted to

gather from many sources the material which would enhance the development of skills in oral communication. It is the purpose of this chapter to examine Abercrombie's presentation of bodily action--looks and gesture.

Looks

By looks Abercrombie meant facial expression. Since in his discussion of tones he summarized the process of vocal delivery, suggesting specifically how the various elements of voice were brought together in expressive utterance, it was not unusual or unexpected that he noted the connection between tones and bodily action as the means of delivery. He observes, "The natural connexion which exists between tone, looks and gesture, those external channels, by which we convey our sentiments and emotions to others, induces me to direct your attention. . . to the second of those important principles of elocution. . . ." ¹ In his discussion of looks Abercrombie drew from the writings of James Beattie, James Burgh, ² John Ward, ³ and John Walker. The influence of Burgh pervades the entire presentation, since Abercrombie not only drew directly from his work, The Art of Speaking, he also used

¹Port Folio, III (1810), 199.

²James Burgh, The Art of Speaking (London: 1761).

³John Ward, A System of Oratory (London: 1759).

passages in Walker's Elements of Elocution which were based upon Burgh's description of the passions. Abercrombie found John Ward's A System of Oratory particularly helpful in that the latter gave specific attention to the countenance in his discussion of gesture.⁴

Abercrombie begins his treatment of facial expression by observing, "Every part of the human frame contributes to express the passions and emotions of the mind: especially the face; being furnished with a great variety of muscles calculated to produce that effect."⁵ The countenance, he continues, may be called the seat of the soul. That which is in the mind of one man cannot be apprehended by another unless it is suggested by signs or "outward actions obvious to sense." In discussing these "signs", Abercrombie used a two-fold division proffered by James Beattie in his essay on "The Theory of Language" to which reference has been previously made.⁶

⁴Abercrombie's use of this source is interesting in that it indicates that his knowledge of rhetorical theory included this restatement of classical thought. In preparing his lectures for publication he also added Gilbert Austin's Chironomia (1806) to his sources. One of Abercrombie's minor accomplishments is that he knew the rhetorical works of almost all those theorists who were his contemporaries.

⁵Port Folio, III (1810), 199.

⁶Abercrombie's use of Beattie's work supports his interest in what Douglas Ehninger called the psychological-epistemological strain of rhetorical thought. Cf. Douglas Ehninger, "Dominant Trends in English Rhetorical Thought," Southern Speech Journal, XVIII (February, 1953), 3-12.

The two kinds of signs, then, are the natural and artificial.

Natural signs are universal interpretations of changes in the complexion, eyes, features, and attitudes, which accompanied by specific tones of the voice, communicate passions and sentiments, or emotional attitudes and ideas. Thus, he continues,

. . . anger, joy, sorrow, hope, fear, scorn, contentment, pity, admiration appear in the voice, looks and gesture; and the appearance is everywhere understood either by a natural instinct, or by our having learned experimentally, that a certain sign accompanies and indicates a certain feeling, or idea.⁷

The variety possible in representation of thought through action alone makes the pantomime a highly skillful form of expression.

Artificial signs communicate thought through language. In the development of language, Abercrombie explains, the natural signs have been in a measure superseded. Yet in areas where language development is retarded, ". . . as among savages, and [language] is of course defective in clearness and energy, it is for the most part enforced by looks, gestures, and tones naturally significant. . . ."⁸

Abercrombie agrees with Beattie that among "polite nations" dependence upon the supporting natural signs varies according to temperament and cultural setting. The French, for example, ". . . from an inborn vivacity, or acquired restlessness accompany their

⁷Port Folio, III (1810), 199.

⁸Ibid., p. 200.

speech with innumerable gestures. . . , to make it more emphatical, while people of a graver turn, like the English and Spaniard. . . who have words for all their ideas, trust to language alone for a full declaration of their mind. . . ."⁹

Abercrombie suggests, however, that in public performances natural signs should be adopted by the orator as an indication of his earnestness and by the actor ". . . that he may the more imitate nature." He continues,

For elocution is not perfect, unless the artificial signs of thought are enforced by the natural; or at least by such of them, as are neither troublesome to the speaker, nor offensive to the hearer. Words of indignation pronounced with a soft voice and a smile, jokes accompanied with a melancholy countenance and weeping, or lamentation with laughter, would be ridiculous and consequently disgusting. . . ."¹⁰

Abercrombie cautions that restraint is as essential as propriety: if, in reciting a "melancholy strain," the speaker were to burst into real tears, ". . . he would lose that self-command without which nothing can be done with elegance. No man will ever express naturally what he does not intensely feel."

Oratory aimed at an emotional response, Abercrombie continues, requires strong support of the natural signs. But the public speaker

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., Cf. James Beattie, Works (Philadelphia: Hopkins & Earle, 1809), II, 13.

whose aim is to instruct and persuade should employ those natural signs which imply conviction, earnestness, and dignity "becoming the cause of truth and virtue."

The lecturer discounts philosophical inquiry into the relationship which exists between human passion and its corresponding natural sign. He cites the work of "Descartes and some other philosophers" who sought to determine ". . . from the principles of motion, and of the animal economy, why fear, for example, produces trembling and paleness, why laughter attends the perception of incongruity; why anger inflames the blood, contracts the brows and distends the nostrils. . . ." ¹¹ For Abercrombie writing as a Christian minister, this investigation has limited significance. He observes that these natural responses are a part of human experience: "We can only say that tears accompany sorrow, and the other natural signs their respective sentiments and passions, because such is the will of our great Creator, and the law of the human constitution."

Abercrombie recognizes that the use of artificial signs-- language--is arbitrarily determined. He states, "The artificial signs of thought derive their meaning from human custom and compact; and are not understood except by those who have been taught how to use them." Any human action, he feels, could by

¹¹ Ibid., p. 201.

previous agreement be made the sign of thought, but any artificial system would be ". . .incompetent to the full, proper, and continued expression of sentiment. . ." unless it possesses the capability of varied, forceful communication. For this reason language as an audible sign constitutes the general channel through which thoughts may be conveyed. Natural signs expressed through the eyes, facial expression and gesture add to the force and variety of communication. He notes, "The use of this language is not confined to the more vehement passions. Upon every subject and occasion on which we speak, some kind of feeling accompanies the words; and this feeling, whatever it be, has its proper expression."¹²

Abercrombie presented this philosophical discussion of artificial and natural signs as a basis for his examination both of looks and gesture. If one determined that it was necessary to categorize Abercrombie's approach using Robb's divisions of natural and mechanical delivery,¹³ he would place this presentation in the natural school. Abercrombie's use of James Beattie in this connection is not unfortunate. His coupling of Beattie's views with James

¹²Ibid., p. 202.

¹³Mary Margaret Robb, Oral Interpretation of Literature in American Colleges and Universities (New York: The H. W. Wilson Company, 1941).

Burgh's analysis of the passions provides the theoretical basis for his specific suggestions regarding facial expression. The description of this area of delivery he derived largely from Burgh, and, as has been suggested, from John Ward. His approach throughout is suggestive, not prescriptive.

Gesture and facial expression, Abercrombie continues, form a language directed to the eye which supplements oral communication. This language of action combines with various modifications of tone to express sentiment and emotion. Abercrombie observes, ". . . nature has endowed us with . . . [both languages] thereby giving the communications of the heart a double advantage over those of the understanding: everyone being formed to understand, by a kind of intuition, the different emotions of the mind, by the configurations and movements of the face and body."¹⁴ Abercrombie observes that it is an essential part of delivery to imitate this language of nature.

In the Compend and the lectures Abercrombie describes the various facial expressions which constitute the natural means of communication. These passages were derived from Burgh and Ward. For the purpose of this chapter, a summary of these descriptions is presented, as follows:

¹⁴ Port Folio, III (1810), 202.

In a calm and sedate discourse. . . all the features retain their natural state and situation. In sorrow the forehead and eyebrows lour [sic], and the cheeks hang down. But in expressions of joy and cheerfulness the forehead and eyebrows are expanded, the cheeks contracted, and the corners of the mouth drawn upward. Anger and resentment contract the forehead, draw the brows together, and thrust out the lips; terror elevates the brow and forehead, expands the eyes and nostrils, and opens the mouth.¹⁵

In speaking, therefore, upon pleasant and delightful subjects, the eyes are brisk and cheerful. . . ; they sink and are languid in delivering anything melancholy and sorrowful. . . . In anger a certain vehemence and intensesness appears in the eyes. . . .¹⁶

The change of colour [in the face] shows by turns, anger by redness and sometimes by paleness, and shame by blushing. Every feature contributes its part. The forehead wrinkled into frowns shows one state of the mind--the forehead smoothed, and the muscles of the mouth expanded into a smile designates the opposite state.¹⁷

In expressions of hatred or detestation, it is natural to alter the look, by turning the eyes either aside or downwards. If. . . a particular object be addressed . . . the eyes should be turned that way. . . .¹⁸

It will be readily ascertained that Abercrombie did not intend that from these descriptions his students should form rules. He refers

¹⁵Compend, p. 97. Cf. Ward, op. cit., II, 351.

¹⁶Compend, p. 99. Cf. Ward, op. cit., II, 352.

¹⁷Port Folio, III (1810), 202. Cf. Burgh, op. cit., p. 13.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 204. Cf. Ward, op. cit., II, 353.

his readers to Walker's Elements of Elocution for the ". . .most accurate rules for the management of the features in expressing the various passions and emotions of the mind. . . ." But, he cautions, unless a speaker feels the force of his subject, he can never manage his countenance properly. He includes a statement quoted in Walker's Elements of Elocution from Edmund Burke's A Philosophical Inquiry into the Sublime and the Beautiful in which Burke observes that ". . .there is such a connexion between the internal feeling of a passion, and the external expression of it, that we cannot put ourselves in the posture or attitude of any passion, without communicating a certain degree of the passion itself to the mind."¹⁹

Abercrombie presents a discussion of the passions in order to demonstrate the various ways bodily action and facial expression could function in support of the communication of ideas. He observes, "To elucidate and to enforce the foregoing observations, I shall devote the remaining pages of this lecture to some of Mr. Walker's most striking delineations of the passions; with corresponding extracts."²⁰ The literary selections which Abercrombie included were chosen to illustrate the various passions. His failure to cite Burgh as the original source for the discussion

¹⁹Cf. John Walker, Elements of Elocution (London: 1781), II, 278.

²⁰Port Folio, III (1810), 205.

of the passions probably resulted from his awareness that the discussion was often printed and variously credited.²¹ The passions which Abercrombie discusses include, the following; Tranquillity Cheerfulness; Mirth; Anger, rage or fury; Fear and terror; and Sorrow. The authors which he introduces to illustrate each of these include William Congreve, William Collins, Milton, and Shakespeare. The discussion of tranquillity is representative:

Tranquillity

Tranquillity is expressed by the calmness of the countenance, and general composure of the whole body, without the exertion of any one muscle. The countenance open, the forehead smooth, the eyebrows arched, the mouth not close shut, and the eyes passing with an easy motion from object to object, but not dwelling long upon any one. To distinguish it however, from insensibility, it seems necessary to give it that cast of happiness which borders on cheerfulness.

This expression of calmness and solidity has even been attributed to inanimate things, as in Congreve's description of the temple in his *Mourning Bride*:

"How reverend is the face of this tall pile,
Whose antient pillars rear their marble heads,
To bear aloft its arch'd and ponderous roof,
By its own weight made stedfast and immovable,
Looking tranquillity!"--*Mourning Bride*.²²

²¹W. M. Parish, "The Burglarizing of Burgh or the Case of the Purloined Passions," Quarterly Journal of Speech, XXXVIII (December, 1952), 431-434.

²²Port Folio, III (1810), 205.

Abercrombie selected these particular passions for examination from among the sixty which Walker derived from Burgh²³ because they represent ". . . some of the most active and powerful passions." In his examination of each, he first describes the emotion, then suggests how it affected the face and the body in general, and finally, how the emotion should be communicated in the presentation of a particular selection which he includes.

Gesture

Abercrombie begins his consideration of gesture by quoting from Quintilian's Institutes a passage which supports his thesis that gesture and facial expression reinforce the communicative content of language. "The expressions of the hands are as various as those of language and therefore it is impossible to recount how many motions they ought to have. . . . All people, all nations, and all mankind, however different their tongues may be, speak and understand the language of the hand."²⁴

The sources which Abercrombie principally used in writing his discussion of this subject include Walker, Elements of Elocution, Ward, A System of Oratory, Blair, Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, Burgh, The Art of Speaking, and to a lesser extent,

²³Walker, op. cit., II, 272-410. Walker devotes almost a fourth of his work to the discussion of the passions.

²⁴Port Folio, III (1810), 274.

Gilbert Austin, Chironomia.²⁵ Austin published his work in 1806, after the appearance of the Compend (1803) and during the presentation of the lectures in their first, oral form. Since Abercrombie did not publish his lectures in the Port Folio until 1809, it is likely that he used Austin's work as he prepared his material for publication in this journal. A comparison of the two works indicates that Austin's contribution supplemented the discussion of gesture which Abercrombie had already developed.

The lecturer defines correct and graceful gesture as "a just and elegant adaptation of every part of the body to the nature and import of the subject we are pronouncing."²⁶ Abercrombie notes that while all acknowledge the influence, power, and necessity of action, there are but few public speakers who venture to use it. He attributes this lack to a "want of native taste and judgement, or rather through want of early and correct instruction. . . ." He reiterates his conviction that the supportive role of gesture is a part of natural communication. He states, "The gestures and motions of a public speaker ought all to carry that kind of expression which Nature has dictated to him; and unless this be the case, it is impossible to avoid their appearing stiff and forced." He notes,

²⁵Gilbert Austin, Chironomia (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1806).

²⁶Port Folio, III (1810), 274. Cf. Ward, op. cit., II, 260.

however, that while nature must be the groundwork of gestures, study and art must polish and correct them.

Abercrombie depended upon Blair's general suggestions regarding action as a source for his presentation. Blair's discussion of this subject included in his Lecture XXXIII on "Pronunciation, or Delivery" is skeletal at best. Blair endorses the writings of Thomas Sheridan on delivery,²⁷ and summarizes a few principles relating to loudness, articulation, rate, pronunciation, emphasis, pauses, tones, and gesture. He urges his readers to observe the common intercourse of men ". . . their looks and gestures in which earnestness, indignation, compassion or any other emotion. . . [is expressed] and let these be your model."²⁸ Blair disavows any plan to suggest rules of bodily action, but in a footnote he sketches some "hints" which should guide his readers in their attempts to improve gesture. Abercrombie incorporated Blair's discussion into his lecture, supplementing it with other sources and his observations.

The study of action in public speaking, Abercrombie continues, consists chiefly in guarding against awkward and disagreeable motions, and ". . . in learning to perform such as are natural to

²⁷Blair, op. cit., p. 366. "On this whole subject, Mr. Sheridan's Lectures on Elocution are very worthy of being consulted, and several hints are here taken from them."

²⁸Ibid., p. 375.

the speaker in the most becoming manner. . . ."²⁹ He disagrees with the advice of some writers to practice before a mirror, since, he maintains, one is not always the best judge of his own motions, and he may actually confirm error. It is his view as a pedagogue that "the dictates of a judicious instructor will always be found of infinitely greater advantage than any mirror."

Action, Abercrombie continues, could be called personified emphasis. He maintains that if the structure of language and the sentiment, or ideas, do not require emphasis, then there is no necessity for bodily action. "A correct speaker does not make a movement of limb or feature for which he does not have a reason." The action which Abercrombie describes in the Compend and in the lectures reflects the mode of delivery prevalent among his contemporaries. For example, in a passage which shows marked similarity to Burgh's work, The Art of Speaking, Abercrombie describes appropriate action in the following manner:

If he addresses heaven, he looks upward; if he speaks to his fellow creatures, he looks round upon them. . . . If he expresses amazement, or would excite it, he lifts up his hands and eyes; if he invites to virtue and happiness, he spreads his arms and looks benevolence [sic]; If he threatens, he bends his eyebrows into wrath, and menaces with his arm and countenance.³⁰

²⁹ Port Folio, III (1810), 275.

³⁰ Compend, p. 103. Cf. Burgh, op. cit., p. 40.

Abercrombie suggests that the speaker avoid such mannerisms as needlessly sawing the air with his arm, stabbing himself with his finger, starting back or coming forward suddenly.³¹ He returns to Blair's criterion for meaningful gesture: "As polite conversation is the best source from which to derive the tones of good speaking, so the behaviour and manner of the most polished part of mankind seems the best school for learning proper gesture."

Abercrombie notes two extremes of the speaker's action--too little and too much motion--"to stand like a statue. . . or to display . . . rapid and fantastic motions." In addition he affirms that ". . . all gestures which are awkward, which are studied and affected, and which have any appearance of stiffness, constraint, or affectation, are highly improper and most studiously to be avoided."³²

To counter these faulty practices, Abercrombie suggests the "ingredients of good gesture:" first, decency of deportment and second, manliness and dignity. Gestures based upon decency of deportment, he continues, are dictated by taste, good sense, and propriety. They are suitable to the subject, to the place, to the speaker, to the audience, and to the occasion.³³ Concerning

³¹Port Folio, III (1810), 275.

³²Ibid., p. 276.

³³Ibid.

manliness and dignity, he states, they ". . . are commonly accounted the attendants of an enlightened and liberal mind; they accordingly bespeak the attention and favour of the hearer."

In another passage reminiscent of Burgh, Abercrombie comments upon the variety of expression inherent in gesture. He notes, "A person who has not given peculiar attention to the subject, would not imagine that the body could be susceptible of such variety of attitude and motion, as readily to accompany every different emotion of the mind with a corresponding expression." As examples, he cites ". . . humility, which is expressed naturally by hanging the head; arrogance, by its elevation; and languor or despondency, by reclining it to one side; the expressions of the hands are innumerable."³⁴

The expressions of emotions, Abercrombie observes, are difficult to imitate in a calm state. An essential branch of education among the ancients involved the study and cultivation of gesture as a practical art. The lecturer notes, as well, that certain sounds are by nature expressive of each passion. "The speaker who has these sounds at command to captivate the ear is great in elocution, and if he have also proper gestures at command to captivate the eye, he must be irresistible."

Abercrombie acknowledges that written instructions upon this

³⁴Ibid., p. 277.

subject are of limited value, since to be of substantial assistance they must be exemplified. He suggests, however, a series of general rules which he derived from Blair, Ward, and, perhaps, Austin, to serve as guides for his students in improving gestures. He considers movement of the hands, posture and action of the body, and facial expression.

Concerning hand and arm movements, he observes,

All action with the hands should be expressed in curve [sic] lines; such being the true lines of beauty; --not in jerks and sudden vibrations of the arm. A continued motion of the arms is by all means to be avoided; their action should generally be very moderate, forming a bow from the shoulder to the wrist, always studiously guarding against an angle at the elbow.³⁵

The posture of a speaker's body ought to be erect, expressing dignity and avoiding an appearance of haughtiness and stiffness.

Abercrombie describes the speaker's stance, as follows: "His position should be firm so as to have the fullest and freest command of all his motions, his feet a little at a distance, the left a little advanced, and his knees in a straight, but not a stiff posture. . . ."

Abercrombie suggests that the speaker's shoulders ought to have ". . . an easy, graceful fall; never elevated or shrugged up, as that not only contracts the neck, but prevents the proper motion of the head; nor on the other hand should they be much drawn down or

³⁵Ibid., p. 278.

depressed, because this occasions a stiffness in the neck and the whole body."³⁶ The trunk, Abercrombie continues, ought to be easy and flexible, always suiting itself to the motions of the head and hands. He cautions against random movement of the body. "The feet should continue steady, and not give the body a wavering or giddy motion. . . ."

The countenance should correspond with the nature of the discourse, Abercrombie observes. When no particular emotion is expressed, a serious and manly look should be observed. Again he based his suggestions on Blair's influential footnote, observing, "The eyes should never be fixed entirely on any one object, but move easily around the audience. In the motions made with the hands consists the principal part of gesture in speaking." While it seems natural that the right hand is used more frequently than the left, both hands should be employed for warm emotions which convey the idea of magnitude or extension.³⁷

³⁶Cf. Blair, *op. cit.*, p. 375n. These suggestions are also similar to those proffered by Ward, *op. cit.*, II, 315. Abercrombie and Ward recount a story of one of Demosthenes' speech improvement exercises. It seems that Demosthenes was troubled with an unbecoming shrug of the shoulders while he spoke. He contrived a pulpit-like structure with a spear suspended above the offending member. The spear reminded him of his shoulder movement, and thus, he eliminated the habit.

³⁷*Port Folio*, III (1810), 278.

Abercrombie continues in this vein, making suggestions about the fingers, "they must bend a little inward," eye contact, "the head should turn sometimes on one side and sometimes on the other . . .", and approaching the speaker's lectern, "to walk the stage well is a very important and difficult province of oratory."³⁸ He touches briefly upon the reader's particular problems. He advises, "In the reading or recitation of dialogue, the voice and manner must change alternately, and correspond throughout to the character of the person who is supposed to be speaking." He suggests that ". . . the book be held in the left hand, the left leg somewhat advanced, and the right arm gracefully suspended by his side; ready to enforce by some degree of action any passage he may meet with which may require it."

In the final sections of his lecture on gesture, Abercrombie explores the problem of action in acting and in the specific areas of public speaking, "the pulpit, the bar, and the senate." From James Burgh's The Art of Speaking he seems to have derived the basis for his remarks on action suited to preaching. He suggests that the preacher should address every individual in the church; he should avoid directing his action to only one side of his audience. His action should enforce the emphasis of his language, but should

³⁸Ibid., p. 279.

preserve suitable dignity. He echoes Burgh's criticism of the preaching of his contemporaries, observing, "The character of the discourse delivered from our pulpits in general is such that gesture is rather properly to be omitted. They are no more than quiet dissertations. Sermons admitting rhetorical delivery must be composed in rhetorical spirit."³⁹ He comments upon the cumbersome construction from which the preacher speaks: ". . .he is enclosed nearly as high as his breast, and bolstered up with cushions in a narrow pulpit, or species of tub, from which he generally reads his discourse with his face almost close to his book, while little more than his head and shoulders can be seen. Such a place of confinement is certainly not favourable for graces or energies of oratory."⁴⁰

Action in legal pleading, Abercrombie observes, derives its

³⁹Ibid. Cf. Burgh, op. cit., p. 45.

⁴⁰Burgh's original comment loses a dimension of wit in this paraphrased version. Burgh notes, "The clergy have one considerable apology from the awkwardness of the place they speak from. A pulpit is, by its very make, necessarily destructive of all grace of attitude. What could even a Tully do in a tub, just big enough for him to stand in immersed up to his arm pits, pillowing his chin upon its cushion, as Milton describes the sun upon the Orient wave? But it is hardly to be expected, that this, or any other impropriety in sacred matters, of which there are many greater, should be altered. Errors in them become of long establishment sacred." Burgh, op. cit., pp. 45-46.

character from the position of the auditors--judge and jury--usually located on each side of the speaker. Since the speaker's purpose is argumentative, and his speaking is less ornamented than a sermon, he will use less emphasis of action. On the other hand, the legislator, Abercrombie feels, has a wider field for the display of gesture than either the preacher or the lawyer, since his appeals to the feeling and imagination are more frequent, his action must consequently be more forcible, extended and various.

The actor is freest in the use of bodily action. On the stage, Abercrombie asserts ". . . the impulse of the mind is at liberty to express its sentiments and emotions without restraint." A correct and general actor must have perfect command of his voice, his countenance, and his person. Abercrombie repeats Blair's premise with regard to gesture, "The art of feeling, which is best learned from nature and from habit, is the true, the only art which leads to just theatric expression, as well as to that in every other species of oratory."⁴¹

While there is no indication that Abercrombie directly employed Gilbert Austin's Chironomia in his treatment of gesture, many of his suggestions are similar to those of Austin. They have in common two quotations--a poem and a statement from Caussin's De Eloquentia

⁴¹Ibid., p. 281.

sacra et prophana which in each case are similarly introduced and commented upon. The statement from Caussin's treatise, which the lecturer noted appeared in 1620, concludes Abercrombie's treatment of bodily action.

It is principally by the practice of speaking that graceful action is usually acquired, the force of which is very great and most efficacious in the power of persuasion. For action is a kind of eloquence of the body, by which the mind abounding in the finest sentiments flows out upon the body, and impresses upon it a noble image of itself. As light, therefore, proceeds from the sun, so does just action proceed from the inmost recesses of the mind. Nay, the mind displays itself by action as if in a mirror, and makes itself known externally, by the countenance, by the eyes, by the hands, and by the voice, the most excellent organ of eloquence. . . .⁴²

In conclusion, it may be observed that Abercrombie's understanding of bodily action related directly to his presentation of the principles of vocal delivery. He referred frequently to "tones, looks and gesture" as the primary means of communication. As a philosophical basis for his examination of facial expression and bodily action, Abercrombie drew principally upon the writings of James Beattie, particularly his division of language behavior into "natural and artificial signs." Abercrombie considered action as supplementary to oral communication, designed specifically for assisting in the presentation of visual clues to the speaker's emotional state. In his discussion, Abercrombie avoided specific attention to

⁴² Ibid., pp. 281-282. Cf. Austin, op. cit., pp. 176-177.

rules of action. Instead he described various "natural responses to emotional attitudes or states which he derived primarily from James Burgh and John Walker. He depended upon John Ward and Gilbert Austin in his descriptions of conventional gestures, and for illustrations.

Two indications in his treatment of bodily action suggest that Abercrombie had little in common with the later elocutionists-- either theoreticians or practitioners. First, he insisted upon the importance of communicating content, ideas, encouraging the use of gesture to add a dimension of emotion, feeling, to the presentation. His insistence upon the primacy of the oral message resulted in his detailed examinations of the facets of speaking which were designed to improve the voice in its communicative function. This emphasis gained sharper focus in Abercrombie's statement that the role of gesture is supplementary. A second indication stems from his reiteration that the basis of gesture must be derived from nature. This is in keeping with his affinity for the belle lettres concept that language behavior is man's natural response to his setting and the resultant need to communicate.

CHAPTER VII

ABERCROMBIE'S SPEECH THEORY:

THE ART OF READING

James Abercrombie defines the art of reading as ". . . the art of correct and articulate pronunciation; or of intelligibly, emphatically, and impressively repeating what is written. . . pronouncing the thoughts of others or our own, exhibited in visible characters as. . . [though they were] our own immediate conceptions."¹ To enable one to become correct, articulate, intelligible, emphatic and impressive in communicating written language, Abercrombie had devoted six lectures to elements of vocal delivery and two to bodily action. The first specific area of application of theory which he presented was the art of reading. In three lectures he discusses the reading of poetry, of prose, and of figures of speech. The purpose of this chapter is to present

¹Port Folio, I (1809), 105.

Abercrombie's speech theory as he applied it to reading.

Poetry

The plan for the lecture on reading poetry is as follows:

Abercrombie describes each of twelve poetic forms and then suggests principles of delivery suited for each. The "species of verse" include the following:

1. The Epic Poem, and Drama,
2. Lyric Poetry, including the different species of Ode and song,
3. The Elegy,
4. The Pastoral,
5. Didactic Poetry,
6. The Poetical Epistle,
7. Descriptive Poetry,
8. Allegorical Poetry,
9. Fables,
10. Satire,
11. The Epigram,
12. The Epitaph.²

Abercrombie bases his discussion of poetry upon two works. He uses Hugh Blair's Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, a source which he acknowledges throughout his lectures. With the second source, William Barron's Lectures on Belles Lettres and Logic,³ Abercrombie supplements Blair's explanations. The suggestions

²Port Folio, III (1810), 377.

³William Barron, Lectures on Belles Lettres and Logic (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees & Orme, Paternoster Row; and Bell & Bradfute, Edinburgh, 1806).

concerning the delivery of each kind of verse represent Abercrombie's original contribution.

First the lecturer examines epic poetry and drama. He begins his discussion, as follows:

'The Epic Poem,' says the celebrated Dr. Blair, 'is universally allowed to be of all poetical works the most dignified, and at the same time the most difficult in execution. To contrive a story which shall please and interest all readers, by being at once entertaining, important, and instructive; to fill it with suitable incidents. . . , characters and descriptions; and. . . to maintain that propriety of sentiment, and that elevation of style, which the epic character requires, is unquestionably the highest effort of poetical genius.'⁴

An epic poem, then, is verse adapted to lengthened narration. It employs the heroic stanza--a combination of verses varying in number and in the disposition of rhymes. Abercrombie summarizes Blair's account of the origin of rhyme, suggesting that it ". . . is the invention of barbarism of the middle ages, and is still retained by all the polished nations of Europe. It is of great service to bad poets, for it conceals many imperfections both in thought and expression."⁵ In the "higher kinds of composition," Abercrombie continues, use of rhyme has been discontinued.

Epic poetry concerns the great, the magnanimous, and the

⁴Port Folio, III (1810), 377. Cf. Hugh Blair, Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres (New York: Collins and Co., 1819), p.470.

⁵Ibid., p. 378. Cf. Blair, op. cit., p. 432.

sublime. Following Barron, Abercrombie observes, "The capital parts to which an epic poem requires particular attention, are divided by Aristotle, and after him by all judicious critics, into the action or fable, the manners or characters, the sentiments, and the style."⁶ Abercrombie lists three principal epics--"the Iliad of Homer, the Eneid of Virgil and the Paradise Lost of Milton." These, the lecturer notes, are the most finished productions of the epic muse. He discusses the episodic nature of the form and the necessity for unity of action in great epic poetry.

Abercrombie observes that the delivery of an epic poem should capture its dignity and power. He suggests, "Such being the sublimity and dignity of the epic poem, the manner of reading or reciting it should be accommodated thereto, varying the tones and expression with the changes of scenery and character, though always preserving a gravity and dignity of manner."⁷

The next form which Abercrombie considers is dramatic poetry--comedy and tragedy. Tragedy, he observes, is more dignified than comedy ". . . inasmuch as the high passions, the virtues, the crimes and the sufferings of mankind, are more interesting and important than their humours, their follies, and their pleasures."⁸ He

⁶Barron, op. cit., II, 193.

⁷Port Folio, III (1810), 379.

⁸Ibid., p. 380. Cf. Barron, op. cit., II, 188-192.

comments upon the relationship between tragedy and the epic, suggesting that there is no very great difference between them: in both the ends are instruction and amusement and both imitate human actions. They differ only in the manner of imitating; "epic poetry employs narration; tragedy represents its facts as passing in the sight. . . ." ⁹ This difference, Abercrombie states, though it appears slight, becomes pronounced when one recognizes that in tragedy ". . . facts and incidents passing upon the stage, come under our own observation; and are beside enlivened by gesture and action, expressive of many sentiments beyond the reach of language."

To clarify the nature of reading dramatic works, Abercrombie contrasts it with the reading of non-dramatic forms. He observes, "In the recital of mere narratives, of descriptions, and of argumentative or persuasive discourses, the reader or speaker stands in the place, and speaks in the person of the writer. . . ." But, he continues, ". . . in the rehearsal of conversation pieces, he must diversify not only his mode of reading or reciting, in conformity to the subject, but also in conformity to the character. Thus, the same narrative and description, if spoken by different personages, must be differently recited." ¹⁰ Is the reader then required to be

⁹Cf. Barron, op. cit., II, 308.

¹⁰Port Folio, III (1810), 380-381.

an actor? Abercrombie clearly states his answer to this basic question:

Not at all. A reader is not required to wear a hump on his back with King Richard, nor a great belly with Sir John Falstaff. Nor is he required to saw the air with his hands, to make faces, to laugh, to cry, nor indeed take any step in order to make the hearer think him a person of the drama.¹¹

Abercrombie is less specific, however, when he suggests what the reader should employ in his reading from dramatic works. He advises, "So far, however, as language and sentiment are concerned, the reader may, and it is requisite that he should, observe the distinction of situation and character."

Next Abercrombie discusses lyric poetry: the ode and song. He notes that "moderns" signify by the term ode a poem on grave and lofty subjects. An ode is sung only on solemn occasions. The subjects suitable to this form are the pleasures of rural life and those which "induce moral reflections." Songs are "little poetical compositions" set to music; they are almost unlimited as to subject. In contrast the sublime and noblest kind of odes are characterized by elevation of thought and diction.

The advice for reading these poetic compositions is general. Abercrombie suggests, "The reading or recitation of these various

¹¹Ibid., p. 381.

lyrical compositions, must be regulated by, and accomodated to the subject they embrace, always endeavouring to imbibe and express the spirit of the author, and strictly to observe that cadence and those tones and inflections of the voice which the particular construction of the verse requires."¹²

Abercrombie comments next upon the elegy. He observes, "It was first invented to bewail the death of a friend; and afterward used to express the complaints of lovers, or any other melancholy subject." This type of poetry, Abercrombie suggests, should always be read or recited with gravity, solemnity, and ". . . even sometimes with that low and tremulous tone of voice which excessive grief occasions."¹³

Following this procedure Abercrombie continues his discussion of reading poetry. The lecturer is hardly significant as a literary critic. His critical discussions are general and strongly dependent upon his sources--Blair and Barron. In his role as instructor in reading, Abercrombie found greater success. He avoids specific

¹²Ibid., p. 382. Cf. Barron, op. cit., II, 145-150. Abercrombie lists Dryden, Gray, and Collins as poets whose odes are particularly well-written. Barron lists Dryden, Gray, Pope, Addison and Akenside. Both praise specifically Dryden's "Alexander's Feast."

¹³Ibid., p. 383.

recommendations in favor of suggesting general principles of delivery which he derived from the character and form of the literary work.

The following may be observed, then, about his suggestions for delivery: First, he insists that the mood of the form dictate the reader's attitude and expression. Second, he recognizes in reading poetry the importance of retaining a sense of the metrical form and rhythm. Third, the author's meaning must determine his point of view--whether it is that of the author or of a character within the selection. Fifth, the elements of delivery are to enhance the faithful presentation of the poem; they must not call attention to the reader. For the purpose of this study, the remaining portion of Abercrombie's lecture on reading poetry will be summarized, briefly noting the critical discussions and their sources, and giving primary attention to Abercrombie's analyses of reading, *per se*.

Abercrombie continues his discussion of poetic forms by examining the pastoral poem. The subject of this species of verse is rural life, and the persons introduced are either shepherds or other rustics.¹⁴ Pastoral poetry ". . . should be pronounced with a simplicity of manner, a softness of tone, and a serenity of countenance accomodated to the innocence and purity of pastoral life."

¹⁴ Cf. Blair, *op. cit.*, pp. 434-440.

Didactic poetry, he observes, discusses ". . . some branch of useful science, some beneficial art, or some system of prudential or moral conduct. . . ." ¹⁵ Such poems should preserve a dignity in pronunciation suitable to the importance and usefulness of the subject, and should be expressed ". . . in so lively a manner, that the things described or inculcated may seem present to the reader's view." An epistolary poem, a "sort of distant conversation," ¹⁶ requires an easy familiarity of manner and an unaffected variety of tone, according to the change of subject.

Descriptive poetry, Abercrombie observes, is intended more to delight than to instruct. It is made beautiful by similes, images, and allusions to the past. ¹⁷ The mode of reading descriptive poetry should be ". . . calm, animated, or depressed, in conformity to the subject, and always aided with a little action. . . chiefly with the right hand." ¹⁸ Allegorical poetry and fable ¹⁹ should be read or

¹⁵Port Folio, III (1810), 384. Cf. Blair, op. cit., pp. 447-449; Barron, op. cit., II, 152-153.

¹⁶Cf. Blair, op. cit., p. 450.

¹⁷Cf. Ibid., p. 452.

¹⁸Port Folio, III (1810), 385.

¹⁹Cf. Barron, op. cit., II, 193.

recited observing ". . . a due accomodation of manner to the matter of which they are composed." The manner of communicating satire²⁰ must partake of its nature, and be sedate or lively as the subject requires, but always animated and sarcastic.²¹ Similarly the epigram should be communicated in a lively, animated manner, and when it contains anything satirical, with an acute tone and sarcastic look.²² Finally, the epitaph, whether serious or satirical, should be read with a gravity, dignity, slowness, and distinctness of articulation suited to its nature and application.²³

Concluding his lecture on reading poetry, Abercrombie discusses the relation of poetic form to reading. He observes, "The three great objects of poetical numbers, or the advantages to be obtained by restricting composition to the laws of versification, are melody, harmony, and expression."²⁴ Each of these characteristics are dependent for their effect upon the oral presentation of the various forms. Abercrombie defines melody as ". . . a pleasant

²⁰Cf. Blair, op. cit., p. 449; Barron, op. cit., II, 163.

²¹Port Folio, III (1810), 386.

²²Ibid., p. 387.

²³Ibid., p. 389.

²⁴Ibid., p. 391.

effect produced on the ear by an apt arrangement of the constituent parts of verse according to the laws of measure and movement." Harmony, Abercrombie continues, implies in music a combination of agreeable sounds; in poetry, both in the construction of verse and in reading, harmony results from the combination of sounds and rhythm. Expression, the subtle emotional nature of content, is best enlivened through oral presentation. He concluded " [when] these essential principles of verse. . . are attended to and produced, there the influence of poetic numbers must be irresistably pleasing and powerful. "25

Abercrombie based his lecture on reading poetry upon a recognition of the primacy of the literary form and the poet's intention. He insisted that mood, metre, and meaning inherent in poetry be retained by the reader. He reiterated throughout the lecture that only in an oral form does the poem capture its potential for blending and meaning into poetic expression.

Prose

Abercrombie states the purpose of his lecture on reading prose composition as continuing the application of the essential principles of correct elocution to the various kinds of writing begun in his previous lecture. In these preliminary observations he indicates

²⁵ Ibid., p. 392.

that his three concluding lectures--on reading prose compositions, reading figures of speech, and delivery of the constituent parts of a regular discourse--would ". . . chiefly consist of exemplifications of those principles, in extracts from some of our best authors, which, if judiciously effected, will not only exhibit specimens of varied Elocution, but also present to the mind some of the more brilliant beauties of English composition."²⁶

In his application of the principles of delivery the reality of the oral form in which the lectures were first presented asserts itself. Exemplification is ideally suited to accomplish the purpose which Abercrombie stated for his concluding lectures. However, there are few clues in the printed text of a selection which indicate the specific nature of his application of theory. In a reconstruction, then, of Abercrombie's speech theory one must rely primarily upon the explanations which accompany the selections which he reads. It is interesting to note that throughout the lectures and in the Compend, references to delivery which relate the structure of language or the nature of the literary form to its oral presentation are most significant among Abercrombie's original contributions to his subject.

In the reading or recitation of every species of composition, Abercrombie observes, expression constitutes its life and energy.

²⁶Port Folio, III (1810), 488.

Requisite to attaining this level of accomplishment, the reader must possess a ". . . perfect comprehension of the author's meaning and . . . such a degree of sensibility as to feel or awaken those passions which his sentiments are calculated to excite."²⁷

The first type of prose composition which Abercrombie discusses is narration. He observes that in this type ". . . the field is very ample and diversified--from the calm recital of historical events to the animated declaration of personal incident. . . ." He advises that the reader or speaker who would express himself justly, must express himself naturally; the degree of animation or expression in the reader must be accommodated to the nature of the subject and the style of the author.

Abercrombie illustrates his point by contrasting approaches to historical writing. He notes that two writers describing the same important historical event could differ appreciably in style and in the different degrees of emotion with which both the reader and the audience would respond to their writing. Both may be critically correct as to language and highly descriptive, but perhaps only one will capture a glowing and animated style which will excite an interest in the mind of a reader and give a degree of energy to the expression and vivacity to the tones of the voice which an equally factual account

²⁷ Ibid.

cannot evoke. When in vivid narration, "The mind of the reader is hurried into the very scene of action, and the emotion is excited by a vivid description, [then the reader responds] . . . with a corresponding expression of tone, and vivacity of manner. . . ." ²⁸

In reading narrative prose, Abercrombie continues, what is omitted from poetry--rhyme and metre--". . . is compensated by the freedom which is given to expression, and the force which it derives from the natural and colloquial construction of language." ²⁹

Abercrombie advises, "The spirit therefore, and energy of expression in a reader, must be accomodated to the style of the author, and the importance of the incidents recorded." ³⁰

Dialogue is the second kind of prose composition which Abercrombie discusses. The field of action in this form is ". . . as unbounded as the diversity and the versatility of the human mind." The lecturer observes that a reader of dialogue should regulate his emphasis and the tones of his voice by the nature of the subject and

²⁸Ibid., pp. 488-489.

²⁹Ibid., p. 490.

³⁰Cf. Blair, op. cit., p. 398 ff. and Barron, op. cit., II, 2 ff. In each of these there is a discussion of historical writing. While it is probable that Abercrombie knew these discussions, he does not specifically depend upon them for his presentation.

the character of the persons who are speaking, using a "different modulation of voice" for every speaker. Abercrombie continues, "To read a dialogue well he must feel himself to be, and assume the peculiar expression of every speaker who is introduced whether of serious or comic cast: otherwise he will never attract attention or excite emotion in the hearer."³¹

Abercrombie notes that "dialogues in genteel comedy," since they exhibit polite conversations or domestic scenes, require a calmness and ease in manner and voice suited to ". . . the peculiarity of existing character." As it awakens no passion, dialogue of this type should be read with a sedate countenance, in the common colloquial key with no other variation of tone than is sufficient to mark the different speakers. Dialogues consisting of impassioned addresses, however, require diversity of tone, of countenance, and of gesture.³²

The three remaining prose compositions--soliloquy, addresses, and works of sentiment and imagination--Abercrombie considers briefly. He observes that soliloquy requires ". . . particular attention and expression." Since it involves the language of a man talking to himself, answering some question, or reasoning upon some

³¹Port Folio, III (1810), 491. Cf. Barron, op. cit., II, 65-75; Blair, op. cit., p. 411.

³²Ibid., p. 492.

proposition, ". . . it must be pronounced in a lower tone than colloquial language requires; with an appearance of profound reflection, and of insensibility to surrounding objects."³³ The tone and manner in which addresses are to be delivered must be accomodated to the nature of the subject, the time, place and circumstances.³⁴ In reading essays, or other works of sentiment and imagination, ". . . the subject matter, the language and the species of composition must altogether direct the degree of expression to be imparted both in tone and gesture."³⁵

In summary it may be observed that James Abercrombie, avoiding definite, prescriptive suggestions, provided his students with general principles for the effective reading of prose compositions. He repeated the general suggestions which apply to the reading of all compositions, as follows:

1. The reader should express himself naturally.
2. The reader should accommodate his delivery to:
 - a. the form of the composition
 - b. the nature of the subject
 - c. the style of the author.

In addition, Abercrombie derived the following directions specifically

³³Ibid., pp. 495-496.

³⁴Ibid., p. 497.

³⁵Ibid., p. 498.

from the nature of prose composition:

1. The reader should respond to the animation, excitement, and emotion inherent in good prose.
2. The reader should capitalize on the freedom and force with which prose approaches colloquial conversation.
3. In reading dialogue, the reader should respond to the nature of the subject with a sensitivity to characterization.

Figures of Speech

Abercrombie gives his eleventh lecture the expanded title, "Of the different figures of speech and the peculiar method of justly communicating to each its proper expression both in reading and reciting."³⁶ In this lecture he includes, first, a discussion of the nature of figurative language, second, an explanation of the figures which he considered "most interesting and useful," third, selections which illustrated each of the figures, and, fourth, his suggestions for their delivery, reinforced through his exemplifications. Abercrombie based his discussion of figurative language and his explanations of the various figures upon Blair's Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres and Barron's Lectures on Belles Lettres and Logic. Again it may be observed that Abercrombie's suggestions regarding delivery are essentially original.

³⁶ Port Folio, IV (1810), 21.

Abercrombie begins his discussion of figurative language by citing the general purpose of language. He states,

The intention of our wise and benevolent Creator, in endowing us with the faculty of speech, was, that we might communicate our thoughts and ideas to each other. Language, therefore, is the channel of thought; and the two great properties of language are perspicuity and ornament. . . .³⁷

Perspicuity, he observes, involves the power of conveying our sentiments clearly or intelligibly to the minds of others, while ornament implies expression which is polished and impressive. Perspicuity relates to composition; ornament depends ". . . in a very considerable degree to elocution. . . ." This, then, is the basis for Abercrombie's separate consideration of the delivery of figurative language.

He continues by observing that rhetoricians have recommended the use of figures. Cicero, he states, called them the eyes of eloquence. Quintilian divided them into two classes--those of sense and those of sound. The former, Abercrombie notes, depend upon accuracy of composition, and the latter ". . . suppose a pronunciation throughout suitable to each, without which they cannot have their appropriate expression."³⁸ Abercrombie lists metaphor and

³⁷ Ibid., p. 21.

³⁸ Cf. Blair, op. cit., p. 148.

allegories as figures of sense, and irony, climax, and antithesis as figures of sound. In his discussion he does not adhere to this distinction. He attributes to all the figures which he discusses a particular mode of delivery.

Abercrombie defines metaphor as follows:

The first and most general figure. . . is Metaphor, under which the language, relinquishing its precise and literal meaning, by a natural and animated description, directs the mind of the hearer or reader to the contemplation of the subject it is applied to, by the aid of imagery and allusion, so as to be rendered visible, as it were to the mental eye, as it would be if represented on canvass to the corporeal.³⁹

When a metaphor is confined to a single word, Abercrombie notes, it is called a trope. The principal tropes are metaphor, Metonymy,⁴⁰ synecdoche,⁴¹ and irony.⁴²

³⁹Port Folio, IV (1810), 22. Cf. Barron, op. cit., I, 255 ff. and Blair, op. cit., pp. 158-159.

⁴⁰He defined metonymy, as follows: "When a trope changes the names of things by putting the adjunct for the subject, the effect for the cause, or the cause for the effect, the matter for the form, or rather for the form and matter united, or the form for the matter, it is called a metonymy. . . ." Ibid., pp. 22-23.

⁴¹"When we put the name of the part for that of the whole or the name of the whole for that of the part, it is a synecdoche. . . ." Ibid., p. 23.

⁴²"When our words convey a sense contrary to what they express but agreeable to what we intend or are understood to intend, it is irony. . . ." Ibid.

Abercrombie notes Blair's distinction between tropes and figures: ". . . tropes affect single words only or chiefly; figures, are phrases, sentences, or even a continuation of sentences, used in a sense different from the original and literal sense, and yet so used as not to occasion obscurity."⁴³ Abercrombie lists as most important the following figures: allegory, comparison, personification, apostrophe, climax, and antithesis.

Concerning the delivery of metaphor Abercrombie suggests, "As. . . [it] is intended to ornament or give animation to a subject, a change of tone, of look, and of general expression must take place, accommodated to the nature of the illustration introduced." To demonstrate the variety essential to the pronunciation of this figure, Abercrombie selected several examples which he read and commented upon. He describes the delivery of a speech from Thomas Otway's tragedy The Orphan⁴⁴ as requiring ". . . a softness of tone, a complacency and gayety of countenance, with a sudden change to the frown of contempt and indignation, and a corresponding tone. . . and at the last, of keen resentment. . . ." ⁴⁵ In reading a

⁴³Cf. Blair, op. cit., p. 148.

⁴⁴Thomas Otway (1652-1685), The Orphan, a tragedy in blank verse, 1680.

⁴⁵Port Folio, IV (1810), 24.

"metaphorical description of the last day by Dr. Young,"⁴⁶

Abercrombie suggests that "the most powerful indications of awe and terror in the tones, looks, and gesture. . .are requisite."

Abercrombie defines allegory as a metaphor extended to a long, continued description. He explains that it is

. . . a representation of some one thing by another which resembles it throughout, and the description carried on agreeable to the figurative as well as literal meaning, requires a similar extension and accommodation of expression, according to the nature of the exemplification.⁴⁷

In his exemplification of allegory Abercrombie significantly modifies his approach to suggesting appropriate action. This departure from his usual practice is exceptional in that it is the only occasion in the lectures in which Abercrombie presents detailed, prescriptive suggestions for the reading of a selection. Probably a later gloss, added to the lectures as he prepared them for publication, this passage is strongly suggestive of the prescriptive character of the later elocutionists.

Abercrombie discusses the allegory in Mark Akenside's

⁴⁶ Edward Young (1783-1765). His poem, "The Complaint, or Night Thoughts on Life, Death, and Immortality," was published in 1742.

⁴⁷ Port Folio, IV (1810), 25.

"Pleasures of Imagination,"⁴⁸ observing that the poet ". . . represents by a beautiful allegory the necessity of industry to promote reputation in every line of life and that some men are more susceptible of improvement than others." He then read from Akenside's poem the following passage:

But, though heav'n
In ev'ry breast hath sown these early seeds
of love and admiration, yet in vain,
Without fair Culture's kind parental aid,
And shelter from the blast, in vain we hope
The tender plant should rear its blooming head,
Or yield the harvest promis'd in the spring.
Nor yet will ev'ry soil with equal stores
Repay the tiller's labour, or attend
His will obsequious, whether to produce
The olive or the laurel. Different minds
Incline to different objects: one pursues
The vast alone, the wonderful, the wild:
Another sighs for harmony, and grace,
And gentlest beauty.

Abercrombie first describes the delivery of the poem in general terms, suggesting that there is little emotion of mind expressed, and that little action is required. He seems, however, to have interrupted himself in the sentence which follows:

What [action] is used should be slow and graceful;
except in the last line but two, when the arms
should be raised to the height of the head, and
expanded; and at the expressions "wonderful" and
"wild" should, though extended, be brought somewhat
nearer together, the palms turned outwards,
and the fingers expanded, with a corresponding

⁴⁸Mark Akenside (1721-1770). "The Pleasures of Imagination," the poem to which Abercrombie refers was published in 1744.

expression of countenance, which should be suddenly contrasted in the next line by a change of tone expressive of tenderness, and a look indicative of love and solicitude, accompanied by a sigh, and inclination of the head to the left shoulder.⁴⁹

His next example in which the "phrenzy of despair is forcibly expressed", is a speech from Nicholas Rowe's The Fair Penitent.⁵⁰

In describing the delivery of this selection, Abercrombie reverts to his customary style: "The strongest expressions of grief and terror are to be given to the face and gesture, in the recitation of this energetic passage: and, as in the former quotation, the last line should exhibit a perfect contrast in tone, look, and action."⁵¹

The next figure which Abercrombie discusses is simile or comparison.⁵² He observes, "The degree of action and of general expression must depend altogether upon the nature of the description given. . . ."⁵³ A comparison may be truly eloquent and yet require very little action and no variety of tone or change of countenance.

⁴⁹Port Folio, IV (1810), 26.

⁵⁰Nicholas Rowe (1674-1718). The Fair Penitent, a tragedy in blank verse, was published in 1703.

⁵¹Port Folio, IV (1810), 27.

⁵²Cf. Barron, op. cit., I, 283.

⁵³Port Folio, IV (1810), 27.

Another will require greater animation. As an example of a comparison requiring little action, he cites an excerpt from a sermon of the Reverend William Smith, first Provost of the College of Philadelphia, whose sermons Abercrombie had prepared for publication. In a passage from the Iliad, however, Abercrombie suggests, "In the following simile, the conspicuous light in which the valour of Hector is placed, demands a considerable degree of exertion in the reader or speaker, in order to repeat it with proper animation."

Personification, Abercrombie observes, is among the most brilliant figures of eloquence. He defines this figure, as follows: ". . . [it] consists in ascribing life, sensibility, and action to inanimate objects. This figure admits to three degrees; first, when some of the properties or qualities of living creatures are given to inanimate objects; secondly, when those inanimate objects are introduced as acting like living creatures; and thirdly, when they are represented, as speaking to us or as listening. . . ." ⁵⁴ In the light of these various degrees of personification, Abercrombie recommends that the expression of the reader or speaker ". . . should rise in this scale, according to the strength given to the figure, accommodating it to the character or description introduced." ⁵⁵

⁵⁴Abercrombie derived these degrees of personification from Blair. Cf. Blair, op. cit., pp. 172, 173, 174, and 176.

⁵⁵Port Folio, IV (1810), 29.

As examples of vivid personification Abercrombie includes poems of Thomson,⁵⁶ Coleridge, Metastasio,⁵⁷ Pope,⁵⁸ and Milton.

He also cites one prose composition, a sermon by Thomas Sherlock.⁵⁹

Abercrombie repeats his general advice about delivery--the extent of animation depends upon the nature of the figure. He suggests that the poem of Metastasio, for instance, requires ". . . the utmost tenderness of tone and suavity of manners." In Pope's "Essay on Man," pride is personified without calling into action any violent emotion of the mind. Concerning the third and boldest degree of personification, however, Abercrombie observes, "Although this degree of the figure is sometimes the channel of calm and tender sentiment, it is generally the language of strong passion; and therefore, when it is introduced as the effusion of a mind violently heated and agitated, a corresponding tone and glow of elocution is necessary for the proper expression of it."⁶⁰

⁵⁶ James Thomson (1700-1748). "Seasons," a poem in blank verse, was composed in four books, one for each season, 1726-1730.

⁵⁷ Metastasio, Pierto Bonadventura Trapassi, (1698-1782), Italian poet.

⁵⁸ Alexander Pope (1688-1744), wrote "Essay on Man," a philosophical poem, in 1733-1734.

⁵⁹ Thomas Sherlock (1678-1761).

⁶⁰ Port Folio, IV (1810), 31.

Abercrombie suggests that apostrophe admits of more animation both in language and delivery than personification, because ". . . the object is addressed in the second person as if present."⁶¹ The tone of voice, and the amount of action employed in reading or speaking an apostrophe varies according to the passion expressed by the figure. "But," he continues, "as these passions are frequently very vehement, a higher and louder tone of voice is generally necessary in the apostrophe, than in that part of the subject which precedes it." Hyperbole, a figure which magnifies or diminishes an object beyond reality,⁶² should be expressed with tones and action accommodated to the style in which the description is conveyed. Climax, Abercrombie continues, is similar to hyperbole: "The object of hyperbole is to stimulate imagination, and extend our conception beyond the truth; that of climax, to elevate our ideas of the truth itself, by a concatenation of circumstances, ascending one above another in importance, and all referring to the same object. In reading or reciting a climax, the voice and expression must rise with the subject."

The final figure which Abercrombie discusses is antithesis. This figure consists in placing together and contrasting things, essentially different or contrary, that they may mutually illustrate

⁶¹Ibid., p. 32. Cf. Blair, op. cit., p. 179 and Barron, op. cit., I, 356.

⁶²Ibid., p. 34. Cf. Blair, op. cit., p. 169 and Barron, op. cit., I, 372.

each other.⁶³ The lecturer suggests that antithesis more than other figures of rhetoric derives beauty from a proper pronunciation. In general, he suggests, ". . .the proper expression requires a considerable pause to be observed between each opposing part, which, with a correct emphasis, will sufficiently diversify them to the ear."

Abercrombie concludes his lecture by suggesting that in forceful expression figures of speech achieve what the writer intended. They should be delivered with "a justly corresponding energy of elocution according to their distinct nature." To be correctly taught, Abercrombie reiterates, they must be exemplified. He states, ". . .the mere description or theoretical communication of the laws and power of oratory can never teach the art of speaking unless the eye and the ear are at the same time instructed."

Abercrombie had three purposes in presenting his lecture on figures of speech:

First, he sought to instill an awareness of figurative language which would encourage a sensitivity to ornamentation in reading from the works of others. He evidenced also a desire to foster in public speaking a greater use of figures of speech. His examples chosen from sermons and public addresses denote this intent.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 36.

Second, condensing the elaborate treatments of style and ornamentation, Abercrombie defined the figures of speech which he thought were most important to the reader and public speaker. That is, he sought to apply a criterion of oral purpose to stylistic devices in order to determine which figures required the specialized examination he intended.

Third, Abercrombie proposed methods of delivery suited to each figure of speech. He evidenced a preference for general suggestiveness growing out of the animation and emotional nature of the figure itself. He selected examples from drama, poetry, and public address, suggesting that vocal delivery and bodily action depend upon the nature of the figure, the author's intent, and the reader or speaker's responsiveness.

Conclusion

Throughout his lectures on reading and public speaking and in his Compend, James Abercrombie advocated "natural" delivery. He specified as a goal in oral reading the pronunciation of written language as though it were our own immediate conception. The variety of expressive forms, however, necessitates an understanding of the means of communicating ideas and emotions. For this reason Abercrombie discussed the forms of poetry, of prose, and of figurative language.

Abercrombie evidenced a respect for form and a sensitivity to the author's purpose as well as design. Thus, he insisted that each literary selection be examined to discover the particular motivation which prompted the author's selection of this mode of expression and the unique focus resultant from his combining form with matter. The communication of meaning, then, becomes effective as the reader re-creates, "as though they were his own immediate conceptions," the ideas of an author expressed in the form and spirit of a literary object. In his theory of oral reading Abercrombie suggested the means of re-creating in personality the essence of natural language.

CHAPTER VIII

ABERCROMBIE'S SPEECH THEORY: THE ART OF PUBLIC SPEAKING

James Abercrombie gave attention to the "Art of Public Speaking" as the second area of specific application of his theories of delivery. Throughout his lectures and in the Compend on elocution Abercrombie applied his theories to the particular areas of communication with which he was concerned. In his discussion of emphasis or pauses, for example, he related the statement of basic principles to the speaker's task. In his final lecture, "The Constituent Parts of a Regular Discourse," Abercrombie sought to accomplish three things: first, he presented a discussion of the divisions of a speech; second, he demonstrated techniques of delivery appropriate for public speaking; and third, he cited excerpts from speeches of well-known orators as examples of each kind of public address with which he was concerned.

Abercrombie begins his lecture on the divisions of discourse by

suggesting the importance of arrangement. "In every species of composition there are certain rules adapted to the proper or scientific arrangement of its respective parts. When such rules are neglected it will be rendered crude and uninteresting to a common ear and to a classical ear, vapid and offensive. . . ."¹

Order or regularity of arrangement and symmetry constitute the foundation of beauty in intellectual as well as material productions.

To achieve order in the formation of an oration, Abercrombie suggests adherence to arrangement and inclusion of the "constituent parts of a regular discourse" in the structure of a speech. He adapts the classical divisions as follows: Exordium, Narration, Proposition, Confirmation, Refutation, and Peroration.² Use of these divisions, he observes, would result in a speech with good form. He reminds his students, however, that ". . . its intrinsic merit. . . will arise from the sentiments conveyed, the author's style or manner of thinking, and the language or channel through which his sentiments are communicated."³

¹Port Folio, V (1811), 22.

²Cf. Hugh Blair, Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres (New York: Collins and Co., 1819), p. 341.

³Port Folio, V (1811), 22.

The influence of John Ward, John Lawson, William Barron, and Hugh Blair, among English theorists, and perhaps of John Quincy Adams and John Witherspoon, among Americans, may be ascertained in this discussion of arrangement of public addresses. It is apparent that Abercrombie's interest in oral reading overshadowed his interest in public speaking. It is also evident that his grasp of theoretical and practical treatments of delivery was extensive. Few of these writers excluded mention of public speaking. Since many of them were clergymen, their concern about pulpit eloquence motivated their attention to this area. Abercrombie in developing the application of these principles of delivery to public speaking was skillful in drawing together many sources and viewpoints. In his treatment of the theoretical bases of public address, however, he limited himself to a consideration of arrangement only, and then analyzed the delivery of each division of an address. Abercrombie relied upon the restatements of classical theory which Ward, Lawson, and Barron had presented, and avoided, largely, the approach of Campbell. Since Blair's presentation of arrangement is conventional, Abercrombie found his lectures helpful.

Continuing in his presentation of the general background for his lecture, Abercrombie suggests that orations are of three kinds--demonstrative, deliberative, and judicial. Demonstrative orations

include philosophical discussion and occasional addresses; deliberative addresses include persuasion and exhortation; and judicial speeches are those of accusation and confutation. Next Abercrombie turns to a description of the divisions of discourse, applicable alike to the three types of addresses.

First, he describes the exordium or beginning of a speech. In this division the speaker suggests to the audience the nature of the subject. He endeavors, Abercrombie explains, ". . .to conciliate their favour, by mentioning any recommendatory circumstances by which it is rendered particularly interesting. . . ." ⁴ Abercrombie recommends that the introduction be brief, perspicuous, modest, and explicit. In the delivery of an introduction, Abercrombie continues, the speaker should be mild, respectful and deliberate, ". . .and his tone of voice so accommodated to the size of the building and extent of the audience as merely to be heard distinctly, thereby reserving the strength and power of his voice to give the necessary expression to the subsequent and more interesting parts of his address."

In the second place, Abercrombie discusses narration, which he defines as a recital or rehearsal of the facts upon which the address is founded, including a statement of the cause, manner, time, place

⁴Ibid., p. 23. Cf. William Barron, Lectures on Belles Lettres and Logic (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, & Orme, Paternoster Row; and Bell & Bradfute, Edinburgh, 1806), I, 555.

and consequences of the action. Again Abercrombie recommended brevity and conciseness, ". . .lest the attention of the hearer should be fatigued before he is called upon to consider the arguments. . . ." The delivery of the narration, Abercrombie continues, should reflect a heightened intensity. The voice should be more "elevated," gesture more expressive, and the general air of the speaker more animated.

Abercrombie lists the statement of the proposition as the third division of a discourse. Since, he observes, the speaker intends in every "correct and regular" address to prove or illustrate something, the proposition is an explanation of the purpose or sum of the whole discourse or thing in dispute. If he treats the subject under several different points, they must each be stated in separate propositions. The process of forming these several propositions is called partition. The enumeration, or listing the points of a discourse, should include three or at most four points. Since the speaker in stating the proposition intends to inform, with limited appeal to imagination or passion, Abercrombie observes that there is little occasion for variety of tone or energy of action. He notes, "The chief things to be attended to in delivering the proposition or subject of the discourse, are distinctness of articulation, fulness of tone, and a considerable

degree of deliberateness."⁵

Fourth, Abercrombie lists confirmation--that part of the oration which contains the illustrations, proofs, or arguments, adduced to enforce or confirm the proposition. The lecturer notes that the speaker should determine the importance and relative significance of the evidence demanded by the topic which he discusses. He observes, "Some addresses indeed require nothing more than an enlargement or illustration to place those proofs in a proper light, and so forcibly to recommend their subject as to produce conviction of its truth and propriety in the minds of the hearers. . . ." He cites Cicero's definition of confirmation as "that which gives a proof, authority, and support to a cause by reasoning." Abercrombie briefly mentions two types of reasoning to be employed in determining and presenting arguments: synthetic, or inductive reasoning and analytic, or deductive reasoning. In the confirmation, Abercrombie continues, the strongest arguments should be placed first, followed by the weakest, with a few of the stronger retained for presentation

⁵Ibid., p. 24. Cf. Barron, op. cit., I, 562 ff. and Blair, op. cit., p. 348 ff. Since Abercrombie limited his discussion of public speaking to one lecture, he found it possible only to sketch in general terms the parts of a discourse. His treatment, which he derived from the sources previously mentioned, is conventional. He shows more originality in his discussions of the delivery of each division, than in the discussions of the parts themselves.

at the conclusion, as a corps de reserve. The delivery of the confirmation demands an increase in vocal variety and gesture, since the speaker will be more earnest in the presentation of his evidence and reasoning. Since the material presented in support of his reasoning will include ". . . description, quotation, testimony, etc. . . . the speaker must vary the manner in which they are communicated."

In the fifth division of a discourse, the refutation, the speaker attempts to answer his adversary's arguments, destroying the force of objections ". . . whether probable or absolutely offered, showing them to be absurd, false, or inconsistent; and this may be done either by contradicting them or by showing some mistake in the reasoning, or by pointing out their invalidity when granted."⁶

In refuting the arguments of one's opponents, Abercrombie suggests that the speaker demonstrate his confidence through a firmness of manner and a distinctness of pronunciation in order that he ". . . may not appear to. . . conceal or evade [arguments] . . . or to be intimidated by their force." Irony, he continues, must not be substituted for the serious answer to an argument of real weight.

The sixth and final division of a discourse which Abercrombie discusses is the peroration or conclusion. He indicates that this division consists of two parts, the recapitulation and the address to

⁶Ibid., p. 25. Cf. Barron, op. cit., I, 575 ff.

the passions. In the recapitulation the speaker summarizes his strongest arguments, bringing them. . .into one view and condensing them into a narrow compass in order to refresh the memory of his hearers. . . ." The second division of the conclusion is designed to ". . .affect the heart and bring those passions into action which are particularly connected with the nature of the subject." Abercrombie maintains that the peroration is the most impressive and most important part of an oration, since in contrast to the other divisions, which have a single purpose, to inform, the peroration seeks ". . .to agitate, to influence, and to 'carry them away captive.' " ⁷

Abercrombie acknowledges his agreement with a statement of Quintilian which he quotes in support of this opinion: "Here [in the Peroration] all the springs of eloquence are to be opened; it is here we secure the minds of the hearers, if what went before was well managed. . . . And as the greater part of the conclusion consists in illustration, the most energetic language and strongest figures have place here. . . ."

Delivery of the recapitulation, Abercrombie continues, should be sprightly and confident, while the address to the passions should be expressed by looks, tones, and gestures which reflect the nature

⁷Ibid., p. 26.

of the emotional response sought. Abercrombie advises, however,

. . . an orator should always keep within those bounds which nature seems to have prescribed for him. Some are better fitted for action than others, and most for some particular actions rather than others, for what fits well upon one would appear very awkward in another. Everyone therefore should first endeavour to know his own talents and act accordingly. Though in most cases nature may be much assisted and improved by art and exercise.⁸

After presenting the six constituent parts of a discourse, Abercrombie observes that in every case it is not necessary to use all of them. He notes, ". . . as we do not generally reason by regular and complete syllogisms, but by enthymemes, where one only of the premises and the conclusion are used, so in a public address whether in the pulpit, in the senate, or at the bar, a strict observance of all the parts is seldom attended to. . . ."⁹

In order to exemplify the parts of a discourse, Abercrombie quoted for his students the "highly finished, though brief address of the eloquent and accomplished apostle Paul to King Agrippa."¹⁰ He pointed out the various parts of the discourse as he repeated the passage. Abercrombie acknowledges that this address did not in every way follow the form which he had just discussed. He observes,

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid., p. 27.

¹⁰Acts 26: 1-29.

"To this exemplification. . .the fastidious critic perhaps may object that the Narration is unjustifiably long--that. . .the Confirmation and Refutation contain neither a series of arguments in defence of the Proposition, nor an exposition of the error of those which might have been brought. And the Peroration contains no recapitulation of preceding arguments, nor elaborate appeal to the passions."¹¹ Abercrombie justifies his selection, however, by reminding his students that the prescribed parts of a speech should always be accommodated to the circumstances under which it is delivered. He commends the apostle because he ". . .as a scholar evinced his skill in composition by preserving in his speech the form. . .and the order for a regular oration."¹²

The second purpose which Abercrombie sought to accomplish in his lecture on public speaking involved the demonstration of techniques of delivery which are appropriate to oratory. Although he indicated that he desired to exemplify the different kinds of addresses, he actually selected four dramatic passages which he analyzed briefly for delivery and then used for his demonstrations. He states, "With respect to an exemplification of the different kinds of public speaking, I know not that I can give it more effectually,

¹¹Port Folio, V (1811), 29.

¹²Ibid., p. 30.

within the remaining portion of time allotted for this lecture, than by reciting to you the addresses of Norval, Sempronius, and Mark Antony, together with the pathetic soliloquy of Cardinal Wolsey. . . ."¹³

Abercrombie selected the address of Norval from John Home's tragedy, Douglas, which was first presented in 1756.¹⁴ His second choice was an address before the Roman senate by Sempronius, a character in Joseph Addison's Cato, produced first in 1713.¹⁵ The funeral oration of Mark Antony¹⁶ and the soliloquy of Cardinal Wolsey¹⁷ were speeches by Shakespearean characters. In these passages, Abercrombie observes, there is a scale of oratory ". . . commencing with the simple recital of a shepherd's boy [Norval], and rising, through the animated and polished appeal of an accomplished Roman senator [Sempronius] , and the insidious and inflammatory harangue of an ambitious and enraged partizan [Mark Antony] , to the most difficult, because most expressive, species

¹³Port Folio, V (1811), 112.

¹⁴Sir Paul Harvey, ed., The Oxford Companion to English Literature (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946), pp. 235-236. "Douglas, a romantic tragedy of John Home, based on a Scottish ballad and acted in 1756. . . ."

¹⁵Ibid., p. 145.

¹⁶William Shakespeare, Julius Caesar, Act III, Scene ii.

¹⁷Henry VIII, Act III, Scene ii.

of eloquence, soliloquy, as exhibited in the dignified, yet melancholy, monologue of a haughty and discarded favourite [Wolsey] of a haughty and capricious monarch."¹⁸

Abercrombie selected these passages not only because they are interesting and challenging as dramatic speeches, but also because they provide an opportunity for examining an elevated form of discourse. He observes that effort to become skillful in the delivery of these addresses should assist in the improvement of the delivery of public speeches in general. Abercrombie notes, "He who can give to these addresses the proper accent, emphasis, tones, gesture, and expression is qualified to recite with propriety, any species of composition, governing himself, according to his nature, by the rules and observations which have been suggested in the preceding lectures." He further justifies his selection by observing that the pieces are generally known and ". . . have received universal approbation for their peculiar energy of sentiment and of expression."¹⁹

It should be observed that in addition to his demonstrating the

¹⁸ Port Folio, V (1811), 112.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 112-113. With the exception of Sempronius' address, these selections are included in William Enfield's The Speaker or Miscellaneous Pieces Selected from the Best English Writers (London: 1774).

delivery of these selections, Abercrombie in his lecture describes the action which should accompany each of them. Concerning the address of Norval for example, he suggests that it is ". . . the plain and unadorned narration of an unlettered youth, who, impelled by an ardent and invincible thirst for military glory, had deserted his father's tranquil and retired habitation, determined to relinquish the peaceful occupation of a shepherd, and 'To follow to the field some warlike lord. . . .'" Abercrombie observes, then, that "The attitudes, therefore, the gesture, and tones of voice, must exhibit a corresponding simplicity, though at the same time, a considerable degree of native energy."²⁰ The delivery of the speech of Sempronius, he continues, should capture the gracefulness and "majestic dignity" of the character--a Roman soldier and accomplished civilian. It must be pervaded with the conviction of national insult and the apprehension of national danger. Abercrombie suggests that the oration of Mark Antony is the most difficult specimen of recitation to be found in our language, requiring ". . . the most perfect versatility of countenance and tone, and at the same time the most dignified firmness of deportment. . . ." He continues, "The attitudes and action should be bold and commanding, the countenance alternately expressive of tenderness and rage, of love and hatred, of patient acquiescence and of desperate

²⁰Ibid., p. 113.

revenge."²¹ The problems to be overcome in reading the speech of Cardinal Wolsey are those inherent in the soliloquy. Abercrombie describes the difficulty, as follows: ". . . it is the language of a man talking to himself, supposed to be unseen and unheard, yet speaking in such a manner as to be heard by the whole audience, and that, without in any degree regarding them, or appearing to be conscious of their presence, but with an eye keenly and steadily 'bent upon vacancy'. . . ." The speaker must give the soliloquy with the same correctness of enunciation and force of expression ". . . as when the attention is wholly addressed to the audience."

In the final section of his lecture on public speaking, Abercrombie presented examples of each kind of address which he had considered--deliberative, demonstrative, and judicial. He notes, "It remains now, gentlemen, that I should exemplify the peculiar style of eloquence appropriate to the senate, the pulpit, and the bar."²²

As examples of deliberative speaking, Abercrombie selected Edmund Burke's Speech on the Nabob of Arcot's Debts, delivered

²¹Ibid., p. 114.

²²Ibid.

in the House of Commons, February 28, 1758,²³ and Fisher Ames's Speech on Jay's Treaty, delivered in the House of Representatives, April 28, 1796.²⁴ Abercrombie indicates that he had attempted to select ". . . such passages as will exhibit the most impressive sentiments and action which their several characters require." About Burke's speech, Abercrombie comments only on the passage which he selected, calling it "brilliant." It is interesting to observe that the eminent nineteenth century rhetorical critic Chauncey A. Goodrich also praised this production. Goodrich calls it ". . . the most remarkable speech in our language for its triumph over the difficulty of the subject, by the union of brilliancy and force, of comprehensive survey and minute detail, of vivid description and and impassioned eloquence. . . ."²⁵ Goodrich quotes Lord Brougham's opinion that this speech was ". . . by far the finest of all Mr. Burke's orations."

²³ Chauncey A. Goodrich, Select British Eloquence (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1882), p. 329 ff. Goodrich dated the speech February 28, 1785, while Abercrombie listed the date as February 21.

²⁴ Fisher Ames (1758-1808), American statesman. This title for Ames' speech is given in the Dictionary of American Biography. Abercrombie described the speech, as follows: "Speech in support of a resolution to pass laws necessary to carry into effect, the treaty (then) lately concluded between the United States and the King of Great Britain."

²⁵ Goodrich, op. cit., p. 330.

Abercrombie observes that Burke had been ". . . stiled, and justly so the British Cicero." He found in Fisher Ames the American counterpart to Burke. Abercrombie notes, "It would . . . be an act of injustice to his [Ames's] memory, to my subject, to your taste, and to my own conscious pride as an American, were I not to offer you some specimen of his splendid talents, as an orator, a statesman, and a scholar."²⁶ Ames's speech, from which Abercrombie selected the passage for presentation, has been called one of the greatest speeches ever made in Congress.²⁷ The Port Folio describes Ames's eloquence upon this occasion, as follows: "He addressed himself to every faculty of the mind, and awakened every feeling and emotion of the heart. . . . The effect produced was absolute enchantment."²⁸ Joseph Priestly, British author of A Course of Lectures on Oratory and Criticism, heard the speech and called it "the most bewitching piece of parliamentary oratory" he had ever heard.²⁹

Abercrombie's selection of examples of demonstrative speaking

²⁶Port Folio, V (1811), 118.

²⁷Dictionary of American Biography, I, 245.

²⁸Port Folio, I (1809), 12.

²⁹Dictionary of American Biography, I, 246.

was equally fortunate. He chose passages from the pulpit oratory of Hugh Blair and Jean Baptiste Massillon. Abercrombie notes that Blair's sermon on the death of Christ ". . . contains a remarkable variety of vivid imagery, expressed in glowing language, and admirably adapted to exercise the talents of an animated speaker."³⁰ During his long career, Blair published four volumes of sermons. Samuel Johnson is reported to have said upon reading Blair's earliest works, "I have read over Dr. Blair's first sermon with more than approbation; to say it is good is to say too little. It is excellently written, both as to doctrine and language."³¹ Blair was a careful craftsman; he employed the utmost exertions ". . . of a vigorous mind, and of patient study, to select the best ideas, and to prune off every superfluous thought. . . , taking pains to embellish them by all the beauties of language and elegant expression. . . ."³²

Abercrombie describes Massillon's sermon "On the Death of a Sinner" as follows: it ". . . exhibits a specimen of impassioned

³⁰ Port Folio, V (1811), 121.

³¹ "The Life of Dr. Hugh Blair," prefixed to Blair's Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, p. ix.

³² Ibid.

eloquence, wonderfully adapted to display the talents of an accomplished pulpit orator, in giving energy to expression, by the solemnity of his tones, the agitation of his countenance, and the pathos communicated by the judicious use of emphatic pauses."³³ Abercrombie admired this sermon because of its variety of expression and sentiment.

The example which Abercrombie chose for forensic or judicial eloquence was the speech of Thomas Erskine³⁴ against Thomas Williams for the publication of Paine's Age of Reason, before Lord Kenyon and a special jury on the 24th of July, 1797. Of this speech Goodrich observes, ". . . [It] contains a fuller exhibition than any other of Mr. Erskine's powers of declamation in the best sense of the term--of lofty and glowing amplification on subjects calculated to awaken sublime sentiments, and then to enforce the argument out of which it springs."³⁵

Abercrombie demonstrated his sensitivity to oratorical skill in his gathering speeches from those who were considered among the

³³Port Folio, V (1811), 207. The Encyclopedia Britannica lists the following sermons as Massillon's masterpieces: the Petit Careme, a sermon which he delivered before the young King Louis XV in 1718, his sermons on the Prodigal Son, on the small number of the elect, on death, for Christmas day and for the fourth Sunday in Advent.

³⁴Thomas Erskine (1750-1832) British lawyer.

³⁵Goodrich, op. cit., p. 76.

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foremost speakers of his era. With his selection, later critics have largely concurred. Abercrombie had as his purpose the presentation of examples of eloquent address, expecting his students to derive an appreciation for the style and expressiveness of each selection and to benefit from his exemplification of the techniques of delivery which he had discussed in his lectures. Since this was the concluding lecture, Abercrombie perhaps selected addresses from dramatic works as well as those from actual speaking situations to reinforce reading / recitation techniques as well as speaking skills.

In this lecture Abercrombie presented a limited, narrowly defined statement of public speaking theory. Drawing only upon this source, one must assume that arrangement is the special area of concern to the public speaker, that excellence of style and vividness of impassioned expression are to be pursued, and that the essential qualities of delivery may be assimilated through studying and practicing selections similar to those which he presented.

The perspective is expanded, however, when one considers Abercrombie's total presentation in his lectures and his Compend. He made frequent reference to the importance of argument, to the necessity for meaningful content, and to the primacy of sound judgment. In the broader context of his educational theory, attention to logical processes of invention, composition skills in arrangement and style, as well as delivery may be ascertained.

Abercrombie stated the requirements for a "perfect and all-accomplished orator" in his first lecture, as follows:

1. Native genius and taste
2. A correct and critical knowledge of the language in which he speaks
3. A peculiar adaptation of the organs of speech to produce perfect melody of sound through all the various intonations of the human voice, which are required justly to express the emotions and sentiments of the human mind
4. A sound judgment to regulate their application³⁶

If it were possible to assume that a student possessed genius, taste, and sound judgment, then a system of instruction designed for improving skills in oral communication could be predicated upon the intermediate requirements which he listed. Abercrombie, some rhetoricians who preceded him, and many who followed him too frequently allowed this assumption to prohibit a balanced presentation of theory applicable alike to reading and to public speaking.

³⁶ Port Folio, I (1809), 207.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSIONS

James Abercrombie came to maturity during a time of revolution--political, educational, and cultural. He saw the formation of the United States and observed the deliberations of this new nation in his native city just months after his graduation from the College of Philadelphia. With the spirit of independence a heightened self-awareness developed among the citizenry. The new nation had its new government. It was to have its traditions, its literature, its music, its systems of education, and beyond these, and yet as a part of them, its opportunities portended by concepts of equality and inherent worth.

Philadelphia was a center of speaking. It became a center of thinking about speaking as an art which could be improved by common sense, observation, trial and error, systematic study, and enlightened instruction. James Abercrombie taught the principles of reading and

speaking, wrote about these processes, and achieved a measure of success not only as a teacher, but also as a reader and speaker. He fits into a national pattern of interest and concern with communication. In the conclusion to this present study our purpose is to suggest the place which James Abercrombie holds in the development of rhetorical theory in the United States.

Philadelphia was an educational and religious center. In the development of its educational institutions leaders among the clergy were instrumental in shaping the early curricula and frequently assumed administrative and teaching positions in the schools and colleges. In the University of Pennsylvania, the careers of Ebenezer Kinnersley, Jacob Duche, Archibald Gamble, William Rogers and John Andrews reflect an interest in the study of speaking which began as early as 1753. The writings and influence of Bishop William White and James Abercrombie extend this early period of rhetorical thought through the latter's retirement as headmaster of the Philadelphia Academy in 1817. During these several decades, a marked affinity for the study of oral communication in the belles lettres tradition may be observed.

White, Andrews, and Abercrombie left writings which reflect the educational and theoretical perspective of the period. Bishop White's "Commentary on the Duties of the Public Ministry" demonstrates his acceptance of rhetoric as related to a study of

oral and written communication. His statement of the speaker's goals--perspicuity of expression and pertinency of argument--and his view that eloquence should be considered as a branch of literature which involves the study of human nature epitomize the belles lettres approach to composition.

John Andrews acknowledged in his Elements of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres his dependence upon Blair, Beattie, and Lord Kames. His work, essentially a summary of Blair's lectures, discussed the divisions of an oration, and then presented the principles of oral delivery--pronunciation, emphasis, accent, pauses, tones, and gesture. Andrews advocated the observance of "natural" communication in ordering and presenting thought. In his sources and presentation alike he evidenced acceptance of the belles lettres approach to the study of rhetoric.

The works of William White and John Andrews, considered with that of James Abercrombie, support the conclusion that in Philadelphia belles lettres thought dominated the educational and practical expressions of rhetoric. In the writings of Abercrombie, however, one encounters not only the belles lettres emphasis upon the nature of language as oral expression, but also the practical implementation of theory in the dominant forms of communication--reading and public speaking. Abercrombie introduced a theory of delivery based largely upon the structure and nature of language as

a communicative vehicle.

Abercrombie's speech theory should be examined in terms of its educational setting. In the program of study which he inaugurated in 1800 in the Philadelphia Academy, he expressed his agreement with Thomas Sheridan, Samuel Johnson, Benjamin Franklin and other proponents of an English education. In this system the study of both written and oral communication formed the unifying center of the curriculum. In recognizing the importance of the vernacular Abercrombie achieved a balance between theoretical knowledge and its practical implementation in language study. In its broadest sense rhetoric pervaded the total program of instruction in the Philadelphia Academy, with the separate areas of study--logic, grammar, composition, and elocution--designed to provide the student with the means for expressing himself in a clear and pleasing manner.

The Compend of Elocution which Abercrombie published in 1803 was the first speech textbook intended for use below the college level written by an American. Since his academy was a secondary school, this present study is unique in that it focuses upon an early approach to the teaching of speech on this level. With the publication of his "Lectures on the Arts of Reading and Public Speaking" in the Port Folio Abercrombie's influence broadened. Since the lectures were

published in 1809, 1810 and 1811, they represent an early contribution to the development of rhetorical theory in the United States.

What then was the nature of his contribution? Abercrombie was a student of language theory. He was fascinated by the work of the orthoepists in accent, emphasis and quantity. He followed closely the writings of the rhetorical theorists among his contemporaries in Great Britain and in the United States. He had a professional interest both in public speaking and oral reading. Out of this varied background he wrote the Compend and the lectures.

These writings reflect Abercrombie's interest in language study and his ability to draw from many sources a unified theory of oral expression. The unity observable within his presentation derived from the relationship which he recognized between the following aspects of language behavior:

1. man's natural communication
2. his structuring of ideas in language
3. the analysis of language in order to apprehend
both the logical and emotional meanings inherent
in language choice
4. the reconstruction of the basic communicative
content in meaningful, natural delivery.

The province of rhetoric which he explored was "the proper pronunciation of words and sentences when they are so arranged as to

constitute discourse"--the principles of oral delivery of content, structured thought, through reading and public speaking.

The listener apprehends the oral form of language, Abercrombie suggested, in bodily action and vocal delivery. Principles of voice and gesture, then, could be isolated for specific, detailed examination in the two broad divisions of his subject, voice and action. In the dominant areas of expression, reading and public speaking, Abercrombie reconstructed the principles of delivery which he derived from an analysis of language and its oral form. In each area meaningful delivery depended upon an understanding of logical and emotional meaning intended by the author (or by the speaker), the appropriate mode of expression, and a sensitivity to the relationship between form and expression.

Abercrombie examined six areas of vocal delivery: articulation, accent, emphasis, quantity, pauses, and tones. It may be surmised that this analysis reflected his interest in language production, development, structure, and delivery. He drew upon James Beattie's discussion of the physical process of voice production and recognized the validity of a classification of sounds based upon their places of formation. The theories of language origin and development interested Abercrombie, as well, and received attention in his works. The basis for his presentation of the principles of accent, emphasis and quantity, he derived from the writings of Lindley Murray, the grammarian,

Samuel Johnson, the lexicographer, and Robert Nares and Thomas Sheridan, the orthoepists. While Abercrombie affirmed his belief that the usage common among the educated citizens of the population centers should dictate pronunciation and accent, he urged upon his readers the recognition that a knowledge of emotional and logical meaning inherent in structured language demanded sensitive consideration. The principles of enhancing communicative content through the use of pauses and varying tones Abercrombie drew from the writings of John Walker, William Enfield, and Hugh Blair.

Abercrombie provided a philosophical (or, more accurately, a psychological-epistemological) basis for his discussion of the elements of bodily action--looks or facial expression and gesture. He presented Beattie's division of language behavior into "natural and artificial" signs, and discussed the speaker/reader's use of action as supplementary to the oral expression of content. Abercrombie avoided the presentation of specific rules of gesture. Instead he summarized as typical of facial and bodily responsiveness James Burgh's discussion of the various emotional states or passions. In his description of conventional gestures, Abercrombie employed the writings of John Walker, John Ward, and Gilbert Austin.

The specific areas of application of the theories of voice and bodily action which Abercrombie considered were oral reading and public speaking. In his discussion of these performance areas he

evidenced his considerable interest in the form or structure of English composition. He divided his presentation of oral reading into three areas based upon form and structure: poetry, prose, and figurative language. Applying his basic presupposition regarding the relationship between meaning and form, he sought to explain general principles of delivery which would enable the reader to find

1. the meaning which the author intended
2. the probable reason for his selection of a specific form
3. the mode of delivery which would combine sentiment and form into a valid reconstruction of content.

Employing this process, the skillful reader would achieve spontaneity of expression. Abercrombie relied upon Hugh Blair's and William Barron's discussions of the forms of composition. He included examples of each form which he discussed, and commented in general terms upon their appropriate expression.

Further evidence of Abercrombie's interest in form may be observed in his treatment of public speaking. In this discussion he limited his consideration to arrangement and delivery. Relying again upon William Barron and Hugh Blair, he discussed the constituent parts of a regular discourse--Exordium, Narration, Proposition, Confirmation, Refutation, and Peroration. Abercrombie

cited examples of the three areas of public address--deliberative, judicial and pulpit oratory--and commented upon modes of delivery appropriate to each. Examining Abercrombie's total development of theory, however, one recognizes a broader perspective for public speaking. He frequently recommended to his students the development of sound argument, vivid expression, careful structuring of thought for oral presentation, as well as skillful techniques of delivery. It must be concluded, however, that Abercrombie's statement of the theory of public address demonstrated less originality and scope than his treatment of oral reading.

What, then, was the pace which James Abercrombie occupied in the development of rhetorical theory? It is over-simplification to suggest that Abercrombie was a part of the elocution movement. Thomas Sheridan and John Walker certainly influenced him and from their writings many of his observations on delivery were drawn. To conclude that Abercrombie represented solely the belles lettres tradition is also a mistake, and yet this movement lies behind his educational theories and his interest in language. Specifically, the writings of Hugh Blair and William Barron figured prominently in his discussion of literary forms. The high esteem in which Abercrombie held Samuel Johnson, Robert Nares, and Lindley Murray lend credence to the view that Abercrombie was, after all,

a grammarian. His presentation of the rules of accent, emphasis, and quantity support this conclusion, and yet these form only a part of his theory.

It seems more accurate to acknowledge that Abercrombie found in these varied sources support for his understanding that the essence of delivery should be derived from language structure and form. In his view, language developed naturally in response to man's need to communicate. Abercrombie suggested that in his natural language man expresses himself freely and without inhibition. Man has acquired the skill, as well, of structuring thought in language. Inherent in this structure and form is natural expressiveness. In order to read or speak effectively, then, one must understand the structure of language and the forms of communication. Upon these principles Abercrombie based his theory of delivery.

In relating the structure of language and oral communication James Abercrombie contributed to a broader understanding of the process of oral expression. By insisting upon the importance of understanding language as basically an oral means of communication, he anticipated developments both in language study and in speech education. Because of the derivative nature of his contribution, James Abercrombie cannot be considered a major figure among speech theorists. However, as one of many teachers and writers

who considered thoughtfully the processes of communication, he assumed an early, important position within the developing academic discipline of speech education in America.

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Major Field: Speech

Title of Thesis: The Speech Theory of James Abercrombie, 1758-1841

Approved:

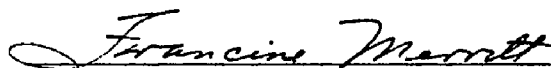


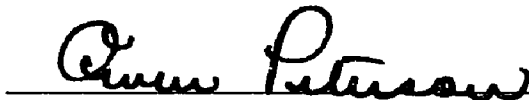
Major Professor and Chairman

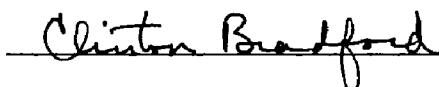


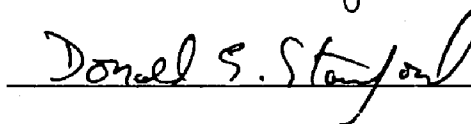
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Date of Examination:

June 7, 1963